

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

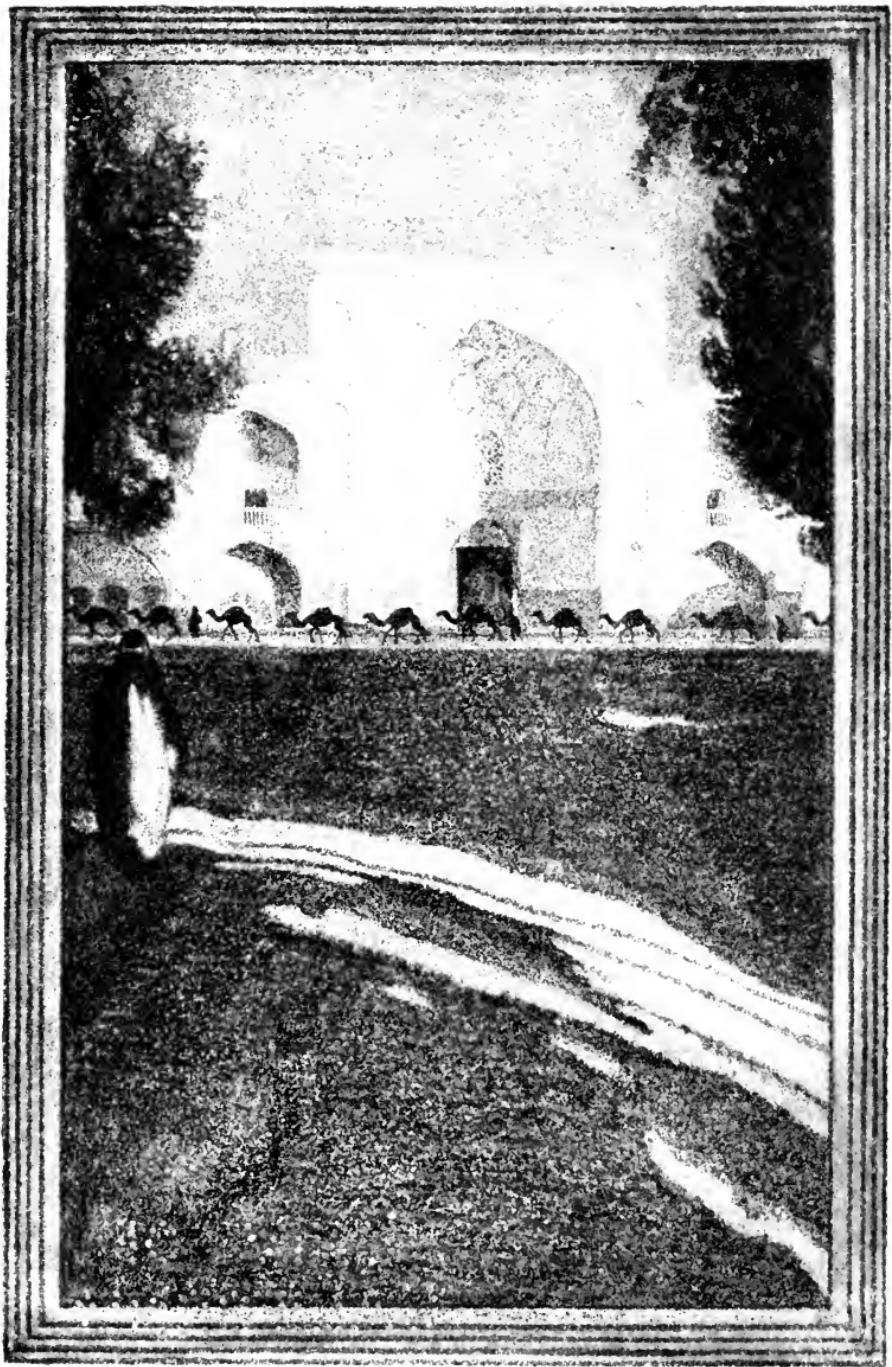
卷之三

七

八

PERSIAN
MINIATURES
WINTER

LINNEA OF
CALIFORNIA



THE SUBLIME PORTE OF KAZVIN

PERSIAN MINIATURES

By H. G. DWIGHT
AUTHOR OF "STAMBOUL NIGHTS"



ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS
BY
WILFRED J. JONES

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1917

DS258

D9

THE MALL
MONTREAL

Copyright, 1917, by
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

*All rights reserved, including that of
translation into foreign languages,
including the Scandinavian*

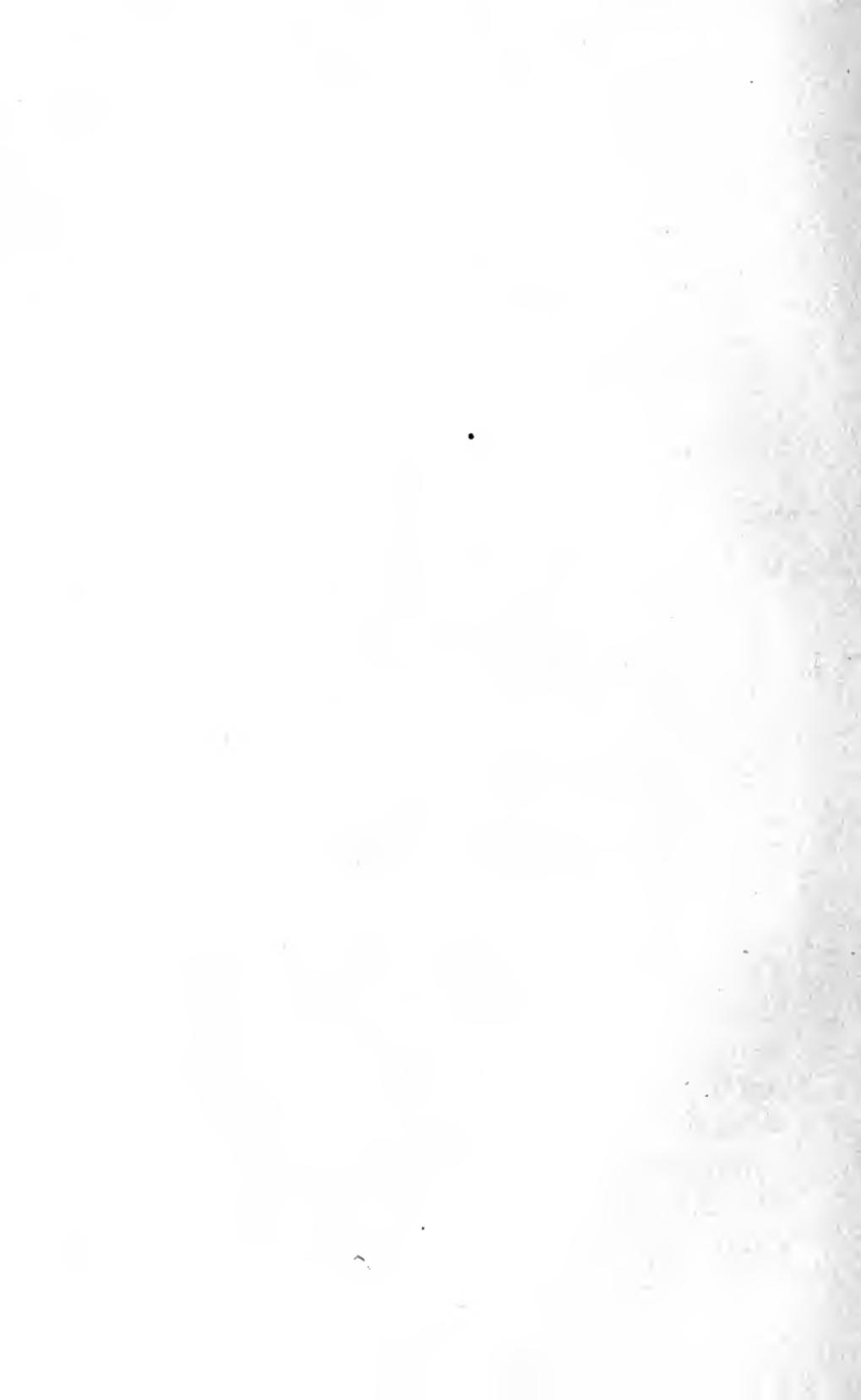
FOR

CLARA KHANUM AND CECIL SAH'B

*"I have eaten your bread and salt,
I have drunk your water and wine,
The deaths you died I have watched beside
And the lives that you lived were mine."*

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	<i>Confidential</i>	<i>xi</i>
I.	Caucasian Prologue	3
II.	Anabasis	20
III.	Kazvin	42
IV.	The Country of the Sky	62
V.	The Bazaar	71
VI.	Leaf from the Book of Ser Marco Polo	89
VII.	Persian Apparatus	92
VIII.	Jimmy & Co.	113
IX.	The Great Slaughter	121
X.	Old Wine in New Bottles	151
XI.	The Factory.	177
XII.	The Satrap	188
XIII.	About Rug Books (But to Be Skipped by Those Who Neither Read nor Write Them)	196
XIV.	The Gramophone	236
XV.	The Sea of Sciences	243
XVI.	Wild Boar	258
XVII.	Vignette of a Time Gone By	283
XVIII.	Avicenna	288
XIX.	The Caravan	324



ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
The Sublime Porte of Kazvin	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Colophon: Persian prayer rug in the Metropolitan Museum (<i>See title page</i>)	
Headpiece	3
Boats at Enzeli	20
Pilgrims	39
The Tomb of Prince Hosein	42
Hamadan Street	73
The Office	77
A Court in the Bazaar	85
Pot Shops.	87
The Tomb of Esther and Mordecai	91
Ye Laundress	103
Ye Butler	107
The Flagellants	122
Zobeida's Litter	145
A Mourner of Kerbela	149
Rug Weavers	177
Hamadan and Mt. Elvend	196
The Fruit of the Knowledge of Good and Evil . .	243
The Tomb of Avicenna	288
Camels	324



CONFIDENTIAL

"In good sooth, my masters, this is no door. But it is a little window which looketh into a great world."

NO, dubious reader. Your book is no treatise on those little pictures, sometimes gaily coloured, sometimes faintly sketched, of turbaned princes and flowering trees and dancing gazelles, which it has become so much the fashion to collect—and to forge. It contains not even one photograph of a true Persian miniature; though if the war had not made it impossible for me to get hold of a certain portrait by the great Behzad, I would have borrowed it to reflect distinction on my pages. And having learned by pungent experience that ye reviewer is somewhat given to jumping from a title to a conclusion, and then visiting his disappointment upon ye scribbler's head, I make it my duty to give warning as loudly as I may that no Orientalist need waste time in turning over these pages. They contain nothing but a collection of sketches in printer's ink, very *décousus*, as that good friend of mine among their worships the editors said who best understands the subtle art of gilding a pill, in praying me to excuse him the honour of presenting a few of them to his public—very "unsewn," illustrating in their random way but one small corner of Persia, and designed not at all to catch the eye

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of the serious-minded. For my experience of the Land of the Sun was such as might have been gained by a mechanic sent out to instal a force-pump for a travelled Khan, or by a gentleman's gentleman in the diplomatic service whose master fell ill by the way and never reached Tehran. I had friends; the destiny of my friends led them to Hamadan; they were good enough to invite me to follow them; I did so a little more promptly, I fear, than they expected. The rest was pure *cacoëthes scribendi*—aggravated by the fact that I happened to be in that remote theatre of the Push to the East when the German War broke out.

I can admit, however, that I thought twice before succumbing to this incurable itch of the writer to make copy out of what he sees and hears, and that in the end I made next to nothing of any journalistic timeliness. If I had been an Englishman, perhaps, I would not have ventured to add a volume even half as portly as it might have been to a bibliography so rich as that of Persia. Yet I have never been of those who look at English and American literature as at two separate things. When the East India Company was formed, when Abbas the Great invited the British factors to help him drive the Portuguese out of the Persian Gulf, my ancestors had not emigrated to New England; and when they did they only secured my title to share in the great Anglo-Saxon tradition of the gentleman adventurer. Not that I mean to qualify them as gentlemen, or my own slight and comfortable experience of Persia as an adventure. But having had a far more prolonged experience of other parts of the Near East, I take a particular interest in that extensive literature of our language which interprets the East

CONFIDENTIAL

to the West. It has counted for not a little, I am persuaded, in the unparalleled success of Great Britain as a colonial power. And I must further admit that I have been unable to put away from myself an ambition of contributing my mite to that literature.

As an American I have felt at greater liberty to do so because our half of the race has grown up in a greater isolation. Much of the anomaly of our position during the early part of the war was due to the simple fact that many good Americans seriously believe the world to have been created in 1492. If we took cognisance at all of the hypothesis that there might be a world outside our own, we saw it from too great a distance to credit its reality, or to imagine ourselves as bound with it in one fate. And we attached to a school atlas something of the finality claimed for Holy Writ. This yellow patch was literally Austria. That crimson splotch was no more than Germany, and must have been so from all time. And Strasbourg and Serayevo were as integral parts of them as Potsdam or Schönbrunn. All too slowly did what was going on in Europe come to mean anything to us, because we knew too little what underlay it all.

As for so remote a corner of the world as Persia, it is too much to expect that many of my own fellow-countrymen, at any rate, are ready to believe in its existence. Still, anything that attempts to make even so shadowy a land a little less shadowy is perhaps worth trying. It was not for me, of course, to do so in any encyclopedic way. Too many scholars now living have written of the history, the geography, the literature, the antiquities, the resources, and the politics of Persia for a mere impressionist to compete with them in their own generation. The

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Persian bibliography, however, contains other names, like those of the inimitable old Sir Thomas Herbert, of Sir John Malcolm, of "Hajji Baba" Morier, and of Lord Curzon's enviable relative Lord Zouche. Their books, or some of their books, while less compendious are perhaps more successful in evoking the true Iranic flavour. For they exemplify the saying of Sadi that "a little is a proof of much, and a sample as good as an ass-load." And they possess a quality which has always seemed to me highly admirable in a book, and a surprisingly uncommon one: that—How shall I put it? That it should not be too hard to read! In fact, if I were to turn out the dregs of confession, I should have to admit that that is the kind of book I would most like to write. But it will please me well enough if people who have been to Persia find it possible to turn over these pages with no more than the usual amount of derision. And if a few who have not been to Persia find here enough of the look, the light, the incommunicable tang of those ancient uplands, to explore the more serious literature of which I have spoken, to discover how far from simple is it for East and West to be just to one another, these loose sketches will not have been stitched between covers in vain.

If I have not fringed the bottoms of my pages with notes, it has not been solely out of anxiousness not to infuriate the typesetter. I must here acknowledge, however, my great indebtedness to those whose ampler knowledge of Persia has so constantly come to the rescue of my own. I have borrowed right and left from Browne, Curzon, Le Strange, and Sykes, as well as from Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole, whose "*Mohammedan Dynasties*"

CONFIDENTIAL

is an indispensable compass to the wanderer through the maze of Near Eastern allusions. I have also helped myself without scruple from the Hakluyt Society's "Venetian Travellers in Persia," from the French translations of Yakut and Masudi, and from other authorities great and small more numerous than in a book of this kind it is fitting to specify. It would be unsatisfactory, however, if I did not specify how much information, particularly about rugs, I owe to my friend Mr. A. C. Edwards of Hamadan and many other places, who if he chose could write a more competent rug book than has yet been written. Mr. Henry Hildebrand of Hamadan was likewise good enough to give me valuable hints on the same subject, while Dr. and Mrs. J. W. Cook of Tehran have taken the trouble to clear up for me various doubtful points of orthography. Indeed if I were to name all those in Persia and out from whom I have received facts and kindnesses without number, I would have to make a catalogue too long to print. But I cannot omit thanking, for their encouragement, help, and suggestions, Mr. Eugene F. Saxton, my collaborator Mr. Wilfred J. Jones, and Mr. and Mrs. F. Mortimer Clapp. And let me here express my obligations to the editors of *Asia*, *The Bookman*, and *The Century*, for permitting me to republish four chapters or parts of chapters which first saw the light in their magazines.

There remains to say a word with regard to the spelling followed in this book. The question of rendering the sound of Persian words and names in English is one of peculiar difficulty, because at least three of the Persian consonants are unknown to us, while the letter *a* is quite as variable in Persian as it is in English. The trouble is

PERSIAN MINIATURES

that those variations are not quite identical, and that one of them, in Persian, being officially described as equivalent to the vowel sound of the English word cat, really verges toward the vowel sound of bet. And officially neither *e* nor *o* exist in Persian. So there you have one prolific cause of an unending row between two camps of orthographers. The Orientalists, on the whole, have the best of it; for they transliterate according to a fixed system, paying no attention to English phonetics and denying the letters *e* and *o* as the Pope did the rotation of the earth. *Eppur si muove!* answered Galileo. And my ear has too long been sharpened to the sound of strange tongues for me to be frightened by Professor Browne when he cries out against the barbarity of putting an *e* or an *o* into a name taken out of Arabic letters. The Turks quite incontrovertibly make the sounds, if they lack the letters. The Persians pronounce them less distinctly; yet for the novice to take Professor Browne's word for it that Enzeli, for instance, should be Anzalí, is to risk straying in two equally false directions. Let it not be gathered that I am so foolish as to argue against Professor Browne's spelling in Professor Browne's books. It is the more scholarly and among Orientalists it is indispensable. But why should I, who am no Orientalist and who do not write for Orientalists, mystify my reader and set the heart of the compositor against me by distinguishing between *k* and *q*, by writing *dh* when I mean *z*, or *w* when I mean *u*, and by strewing my book with dark dots and accents?

I shall not. For it seems to me highly advisable to discourage the layman from adding to the chaos which already reigns in his spelling of Oriental names. I there-

CONFIDENTIAL

fore choose the simpler system of the Royal Geographical Society. If it has its own conventions, they are at least more familiar and more comprehensible. The consonants are pronounced as in English, except that *c*, *g*, and *s* never encroach upon the sounds of *k*, *j*, or *z*. The vowels are pronounced as in Italian, each separately and none silent. I have made one concession to the Orientalists in retaining the *b* after a final *e*, because nothing on earth will make the average Anglo-Saxon pronounce Sine, for example, otherwise than as the mystic consort of Cosine; whereas he will be obliged to make two syllables out of Sineh. I have further borrowed, for certain Turkish words, the German *umlaut* for a *ü* which does not exist in our language, and the French circumflex for a still more unpronounceable Turkish *ı*. Otherwise I make no use of accents, for in Persian and Turkish the stress falls almost invariably on the last syllable.

One unfortunate consequence of this system is that I add a new variation to an already too various name: that of the poet Firdeusi. This, to an enraged Orientalist, is a barbarity more shocking than Mehmed. Yet it comes much nearer the true sound than his Firdawsi, or the popularised Firdowsi, or the perhaps most common Firdausi—unless you remember, which you won't unless you know Persian, that that *a* is a cattish *a* verging on *e*. The Italian *eu* hits it almost exactly. But I must end by confessing that consistency is too rare a jewel for me always to keep hold of it. If I say Enzeli, as Professor Browne very aptly points out, I should also say Tebriz and Hemedan. Well, I don't! For usage seems to have taken the matter out of my hands—as in other cases have ignorance or the idiosyncrasies of the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

English tongue. And Tehran? As to that, it is high time English-speaking people stopped using a French spelling for a name which really has only two syllables. After all, they will not be so upset as if I had followed Professor Browne and said Tíhrán!

PERSIAN
MINIATURES



I

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

*Here thou at greater Ease than bee
Mayst behold what bee did see;
Thou participates his Gaines,
But bee alone reserves the Paines.
Hee traded not with Luker sotted.
Hee went for Knowledge and bee got it.
Then thank the Author: Thanks is light,
Who bath presented to thy Sight
Seas, Lands, Men, Beasts, Fishes, and Birds,
The rarest that the World affoords.*

The Lord Fayfax, Baron of Cameron, on Sir Thomas Herbert, his:

SOME YEERES TRAVELS INTO DIVERS PARTS OF ASIA AND AFFRIQUE

WE HAD formed the habit, during a week of leisurely Black Sea travel, of waking up every morning off a town of low red roofs and slim white minarets, set under a high green coast. Batum also sat under a high green coast—if so much higher than usual as to be tipped with snow. But instead of anchoring offshore and bargaining

PERSIAN MINIATURES

with the crews of tall-prowed Turkish boats, we tied up to a quay and walked ashore with no more ado than a brief session with my lords of the customs and the passport bureau. And more conspicuous than any minaret were the syringe domes of a Russian cathedral. Whereby it appeared that something had happened in Batum since it stopped being a Turkish town in 1878.

That fact was still more apparent when I stepped into a true Russian droshky, driven by a true Russian coachman—a kind of centaur so at one with his box that no human being could tell where coachman stopped and carriage began—and rattled away over true Russian cobblestones. I suspect, however, that if I had had the courage to scratch that coachman I would have found a Georgian, if not a Tartar. In the Caucasus whenever they don't know what to call a man they call him a Georgian. That they are not always right I once or twice proved by asking the man himself and finding out that he was what I thought; namely, a Laz. Those quick-tempered people are almost as common in Batum as they are in Trebizond, and they look enough like Georgians to be their cousins. They all wear the same top boots, the same slack breeches, the same short jackets, and the same long-flapped hoods with a tassel at the point—which serve them equally for turbans, mufflers, or capes. The big black policemen of Batum dress like that, being Georgians. I wondered if the house boys of the Hôtel de France were, too. They wore black Russian blouses and spoke no known language. But there are still plenty of Turks left in the town, as I discovered while prowling around before it was time to take my evening train.

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

They say that a famous bridge over the Golden Horn is a good place from which to admire the nations of the earth. It struck me that the railway station of Batum might be a better one, when I went there in charge of an Armenian porter from the hotel. A good many among the crowd that packed the waiting rooms were his own fellow countrymen. They were darker and fierier looking people than the Armenians I had seen before, with an odd look of the Latin Quarter about many of them. One group of young men in broad-brimmed hats, string ties, and peg-top trousers stood tightly under an electric light around an intense young woman with a slight moustache, who read aloud to them out of a brand new book of poetry. How do I know? It rhymed! But they were there, my porter told me, to do honour to the memory of a certain Armenian philanthropist who had recently died in Constantinople and whose body, having been brought to Batum on my ship, was about to be taken to Tiflis by my train, thence to be sent for burial to the great Armenian monastery of Echmiadzin. Sure enough, at the end of the train stood a freight car which had been turned into a *chapelle ardente*, with flowers and candles standing around a black catafalque. However, Armenians were but a fraction of that polyglot company, among whom were Greeks, Turks, Tartars, the inevitable Georgian, and the equally inevitable Russian, together with such exotic specimens as the tall Swede who had travelled most of the length of the Black Sea in my steamer chair, the fat German who had left no stone unturned to find out where I was going and why, and an English agent of the American Licorice Company.

The train in which my Armenian presently deposited

PERSIAN MINIATURES

me was the St. Petersburg express; for to get from Batum to St. Petersburg by rail—Petrograd had still to be invented—you must cross the Transcaucasus to Derbend and then come back to Rostov on the north side of the mountains, before striking up country for Moscow. It was the usual roomy Russian train, thanks to the broader gauge of the Russian rails, and my compartment was the roomier because the seats in it were numbered. What interested me first, however, was the view. That was striking enough in the moonlight as we ran along the edge of the sea toward the ghostly heights of the Caucasus. Then I began to be interested in my fellow travellers. They turned out to be all Greeks and all of one party, on their way to a wedding in Tiflis. This information was vouchsafed to me by the bride herself, in an English much more creditable than my flimsy Romaic. As for her short, fat, ugly, gay mamma, she was more fluent in Italian and Turkish. There were also two younger daughters, one plumper and one more pinched, dressed as exactly alike as two magpies, an older married daughter with a diamond, a dumpy, talkative person who had the air of a poor relation, and a rakish husband or two. They all seemed to be as much at home in Russian as they were in Greek, and between the odds and ends of other languages which we possessed in common we got along famously.

The gay mamma, to whom I would have proposed before the night was out if I had been quite sure that neither of the rakish husbands belonged to her, finally announced that she was tired of doing all the talking and that we must take turns telling stories, propounding enigmas, or otherwise helping to pass the time. She

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

opened this Decameron with a Turkish folk tale which I had heard before but never with so much verve and mimicry. One of the rakish husbands came next. He tried to get out of his turn by declaring that none of the stories he knew could be told in such company. The ladies all cried out that he should try them and see. Whereupon he compromised with a string of Turkish proverbs. The bride followed, and she told a Caucasian version of the story of Cupid and Psyche, about a fairy who was a fairy by night and a flower in the daytime—to the infinite despair of her lover. The fairy told him, however, that if in the morning he could distinguish her from the other flowers in the garden, and carry her away in his hand, he would break the enchantment and she would always be his. So in the morning he went into the garden and he broke the enchantment, because of all the flowers the one he picked was the only one that had no dew on its petals. . . .

In the meantime my knees knocked together; for telling stories is not my strong point, and least of all in strange tongues. But in the end I was saved by the gay mamma, who could not stop talking long enough for the turn to go the entire round. She then proposed that we do something which all could do together. She therefore lifted up a far from disagreeable voice in song, and the others joined in—I wondering what they would make of it next door in the *Damencoupé*. As it transpired, most of us belonged in the *Damencoupé*, though the bride had sung in her marriage morn before she retired thither with her younger sisters and her poor relation. After that the rest of us arranged ourselves for the night. To that end we turned up the backs of the seats, as may be

PERSIAN MINIATURES

done in a Russian car even when it is not a sleeper, and one of the rakish husbands and I stretched out on the upper storey, while the gay mamma and her married daughter at last dropped into silence below. The only discomfort about it was that the double windows were hermetically sealed for winter.

In the simplicity of my heart I had imagined that one travelled most of the way from Batum to Baku in romantic mountain passes. To my great surprise and disappointment, accordingly, I discovered in the morning that no mountains were near us. They had receded during the night to either side of a wide bare brown valley with water in the bottom of it. They did, however, draw together a little as we went on, and towers decorated the tops of hills. Sheepskin caps, furthermore, began more thickly to decorate the roads beside the track, where I also noticed sheets of ice, and about half-past eight we stopped at Tiflis. This for me was doubly an hour of doom, for not only did I pine to look at Tiflis but I died to accept the gay mamma's invitation and go to the wedding with my lively friends. The trouble was that I had other friends to meet in Baku, and a Caspian boat to catch. So I had time only to be introduced to a smart Greek bridegroom, to eat an excellent breakfast, to stare all too briefly at the astounding people in the station, and to admire Tiflis from the compartment window as we rumbled away from it, hanging on either lip of a deep gorge with a cog railway climbing a mountain behind. After that the bare brown valley widened again, giving view of distant snow mountains on the right and more distant snow mountains on the left. In front of the latter ran a line of low hills, fluted

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

with sharp erosions, that looked sometimes like mud volcanoes and sometimes like an old shore.

I was not, I must confess, too upset at being torn from my Greek friends to take notice of my new companions. Chief among them were a Russian matron, much more serious than the gay mamma whose corner she took, and her big bold black daughter with a bang, with an eye that looked as if it might have been drawn by Mr. Maurice Ketten, and with a willingness to cultivate casual masculine acquaintance. That eye filled me with mingled emotions, for while it alarmed me a little it was the first Russian eye into which I had gazed for more than two seconds since I had set foot in the Caucasus. And for Russian eyes, as for many other things Russian, I have always had a weakness. I hardly know why. Perhaps because I went to school with some boys from Taganrog, at the mouth of the Don. Perhaps because a railway clerk in St. Petersburg once insisted, with considerable asperity, in spite of my feeble protests, on giving me change for ten pounds out of a five pound note, to the no small advantage of my depleted exchequer. Perhaps because an old lady who might have taught me far more than she did set me reading Tolstoy and Turgeniev long before I knew anything about Hardy and Meredith, or Howells and James, or even Jack London and Richard Harding Davis. With the unhappy result that when in time I came to the latter, and particularly the last two, I failed to derive quite the satisfaction I might have felt if I had happened on them first.

These things, of course, are largely a matter of the personal equation, and the world is luckily big enough

PERSIAN MINIATURES

for Tolstoy and Richard Harding Davis to sit on the same shelf. I find, though, that on my shelf the Russians have a curious, if a perfectly unconscious, way of putting out everybody else's eye. They are so human. They are so simple. They see around so many corners. Nothing frightens them; but they are not prudish about it, as an Anglo-Saxon has a tendency to be, or cynical about it, as a Latin has a tendency to be. Neither are they sentimental about it. And behind it all there is a strange trouble, which somehow contrives not to be childish even in the face of an American Glad Book. Dostoevsky rather puts his finger on it, in "The Brothers Karamazov": "It is different for other people; but we in our green youth have to settle the eternal questions first of all. That's what we care about. Young Russia is talking about nothing but the eternal questions now." And the things that come into their heads! Do you remember Svidrigailov, in "Crime and Punishment"?

"'I don't believe in a future life,' said Raskolnikov.

"Svidrigailov sat lost in thought.

"'And what if there are only spiders there, or something like that?' he said suddenly.

"'He is a madman,' thought Raskolnikov."

And so, perhaps, do you. But only a Russian would think of that. And only a Russian could have written that tremendous scene between Svidrigailov and Sonia, surely the most shaking of its kind in all literature, when he gets her into that garret and then lets her go.

I regarded the bold black eye of the young lady with a bang and asked myself, with some misgiving, if it were seeking the solution of eternal questions. I went into the corridor to think about it. There I found myself

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

beside another lady, much older, who presently asked me something in Russian. She looked so much like an English or New English woman of the kind I most like that I didn't answer, as I often do under such circumstances, that I hadn't a match and didn't know what time it was. I told her instead that I didn't know Russian. And before I knew it she was telling me that she was going to Petersburg for the winter but that she lived in Batum, or just outside of it, where she had a house and a garden in sight of the Black Sea. In her hand she held some violets from that garden and she offered me a few of them, telling me how quickly everything grew there, even subtropical things, under the high white wall of the Caucasus. Anarchists, she said, preach the destruction of property; but it is an instinct of man to have something of his own. When one is young one can travel, and be alone. Later one wishes a home, and a garden. Her garden she had planted herself, from the beginning. It was like her child, now that her children were grown up. She and her husband had done everything by degrees, as they could save money from their pay. Her husband was a retired civil servant of some kind. She didn't go into particulars and I didn't ask for them: but she told me that they had lived in many parts of Russia, adding that she had been very fortunate. She had married young a young and handsome husband, with whom she had always been happy. Her children, too, had never caused them any unhappiness—except one daughter, who died in the flower of her age. At first, she said, she took it for granted. Later, however, when she saw how many marriages of her friends were unhappy, she discovered how fortunate she had been. Her chil-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

dren, of course, she missed, now that they were married and living in homes of their own. But there had been among them none of the disasters of which one was constantly hearing. And there was her garden. . .

She said it all quite simply, without polite preliminaries, just as if she had walked out of Turgeniev. And she said many other things which I have often thought of since. "My country makes me sad," she said—"so large, so varied, and he who should govern not strong enough, and those who do govern thinking only of their pockets. There is too much unhappiness. There will be another uprising." That was in November, 1913. "People cannot speak or think. Those who do, have to leave the country. Tolstoy was the only one who stayed, and whom they dared not touch." The mention of that name brought up other names. I told her that I had been in New York when Gorky went there—in 1905, was it—and that I had not been proud of the zeal which my fellow countrymen showed in casting the first stone at him. To my surprise she rather took their part against me, although she considered Gorky the greatest of living Russian writers. She surprised me, too, by saying that he had deprecated the reading of Dostoievsky by the younger generation—though perhaps I misunderstood her. Of Artsibashev's "Sanin" she cried out that it was a dreadful book. She told me I should rather read Korolenko, and the plays of Ostrovsky. When I told her what an impression "Evgeni Onegin" made upon me, years ago, in Moscow, and what new things had been revealed to me when Safonov came to New York to conduct the Philharmonic Orchestra, she was evidently pleased. "Yes," she said; "I love Chopin, Schumann,

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

Beethoven. But our Russians have something they have not—a sadness, an understanding."

All this time we had been standing up in the corridor. My old lady out of Turgeniev finally invited me to sit down in her compartment—which happened to be the *Damencoupé*. And there I walked into Dostoievsky. For the back of one of the seats was turned up, and on that upper shelf another lady was lying, of whom I hesitatingly asked if I did not disturb her. She had a strange thin face and a quantity of pale hair piled loosely on top of her head. "Monsieur does not disturb me," she replied. "He is a stranger, and therefore not a bore—yet. Afterwards we shall see!" She said it in a deep, hoarse voice, and in a French much more fluent than the old lady's or mine, but with an extraordinary accent. At first she only listened to the two of us who sat below, supplying every now and then the word we groped for. Then she began to talk, too, asking me what I was up to and telling me about the barbarous Caucasus, the magnificent scenery, the pass from Tiflis to Vladikavkaz. She was from Tiflis herself. "I would have liked to travel, too," she remarked. "But now—it is finished. I go to Petersburg, to die." She said it without heroics, without sentimentality, in her deep, hoarse voice, her terrific accent, stroking her pale hair on her upper shelf. And she and the older lady presently fell afoul of each other over the Russian peasant. The lady from Tiflis insisted that he was lazy, stupid, drunken, the curse and despair of the country. The lady from Batum took up his defence, saying that she had spent all her life with the *muzbik* and thought the world of him. If he was drunken it was largely the fault of the Government, who

PERSIAN MINIATURES

forced vodka upon villages even when they didn't want it, for the sake of the revenue. Ignorant he certainly was, that *muzhik*; but what chance had he had? And she went on to tell with what difficulty she had obtained permission from Petersburg to open a night school for peasants in one of the cities of Little Russia where her husband was then stationed. More peasants had come than there was room for, and soldiers, too—till her husband was suddenly transferred to another province. For the rest, the *muzhik* merely followed the example set him by his betters, in this generation without restraint, without faith, without God. As for her, she cared nothing for pictures and confessions, she said: only the Gospel, and to hold something sacred. . . . The lady from Tiflis listened from her upper shelf, her eyes strangely intense in her thin face. "Yes," she finally uttered in that hoarse voice: "To hold something sacred—" And she turned her face to the wall.

It suddenly came over me in the silence that followed, as I stared at that pile of pale hair, that there was something more terrific than an accent on that upper shelf. Yet the eyes that looked at the wall were not terrified. And who knew what they saw? They saw, at any rate, that the stranger was after all a bore. So I went back, awkwardly enough, to my own compartment. The matron and her big black daughter were still there. They at once made it known to me that they were not seeking the solution of eternal questions, and I found, after my visit in the *Damencoupé*, that I would not lay it up against them. The only thing I laid up against them was that they looked a little too arch over my violets, and asked me whether the lady from Batum were a governess or a

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

school teacher. They had evidently been listening. I assured them that the lady from Batum was, on the contrary, the wife of a Governor General. It may not have been true, but it impressed them considerably. As for them, they were the wife and daughter of a Colonel, now stationed at Vladikavkaz. Was I going to Vladikavkaz? In the summer it was delicious, when the *beau monde* of Tiflis and Moscow and Petersburg came to the resorts on the north side of the mountain. In the winter, however, it was a little sad. Then the daughter began to prepare me for Vladikavkaz by giving me a Russian lesson, giggling in spite of herself at my dreadful pronunciation. But presently a tall lieutenant made his appearance, and the Russian lesson came to an abrupt end.

I did not mind, for I caught sight through the window of a rose-coloured lake. By this time we had come much nearer the mountains of Prometheus, whose white heights wore a delicate flush. Far away on the other side a row of silver peaks ran sharp against a painted sky. Were they Persian peaks, I wondered? If they were, the sight of them gave me no such thrill as should be felt by the right-minded pilgrim when first he beholds the distant goal of his desire. Even the summits of Prometheus, whose flush paled imperceptibly and took on a phosphorescent glimmer, failed to do what they should for a man who had sat in the theatre of Dionysus. Instead of thinking about the Greek Titan and his rock and his vulture, I found myself thinking about the Russian lady from Tiflis, lying on her upper shelf in the *Damencoupé* with her wide-open eyes to the wall. Also, I grew rather sleepy. The train rumbled on. The country outside turned dimmer, flatter, fantastically blanched. Could

PERSIAN MINIATURES

that be sand? Like enough. For all of a sudden I caught, through the corridor window, the glint of wide water under a climbing moon. The Caspian Sea! I did the Caspian Sea the honour to wake up and go into the corridor. I then discovered to my astonishment that the Caspian Sea, for all its moon of Turkestan, looked exactly like Lake Champlain under the moon of Vermont—until I spied on the shore a vagrant camel, the silhouette of him dark and exotic as the East against a rippling glamour. He saved the day for the Caspian, did that camel! Then ruddier and more melodramatic fires began to flare on the horizon, to the north. And at last, latish in the evening, I said good-bye to my Russian friends and got off at Baku.

Those fires and that camel are the symbols and epitome of Baku. Baku is, if you like, a jumping-off place. It is, at any rate, the place from which you jump off to Tehran or Samarkand. But it had to me an almost American air—as it were a Pittsburgh dipped in Asia. That is perhaps because Baku flames and belches, too, if after a manner of its own, and without the diabolic beauty with which nature and man have conspired to endow the true Pittsburgh. Baku sits on lower and more barren hills, regarding a greasy gray-green sea that never again looked to me so picturesque as when I first beheld it in the moonlight behind a camel. The houses of Baku, furthermore, make no attempt to scrape the sky, although they look solider than those of Pittsburgh. They are astonishingly new, however, a great many of them. And Baku bustles in a way that is quite upsetting to one's theories of that part of the world. What gives this process its particular colour is that Baku is, as a matter

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

of fact, a fairly venerable town. Some twenty years before America was discovered a Venetian ambassador by the name of Giosafat Barbaro passed that way and wrote, or his quaint English translator did, of "a citie called Bachu, whereof the sea of Bachu taketh its name, neere vnto which citie there is a mountaigne that casteth foorth blacke oyle, stynkeng horryblye, & which they, nevertheles, vse for furnissheng of their lightes, and for the anoynteng of their camells twies a yere." And all honest tourists, of whom I regret to confess I am not one, piously visit in Baku a place where the fires of Zoroaster have burned these two or three thousand years.

The remnants of this more ancient Baku are to be seen in certain higher parts of the town, where a castle stands in light stone, rather like the tufa of Naples, adorned with Persian lions and inscriptions. Beyond it stretches a quarter which went far toward consoling me for the discovery that I might after all have stopped off in Tiflis, inhabited as it is by fragments of more strange races than I know anything about. The races of Pittsburgh are no doubt as varied, but they all dress and look more or less alike, whereas in Baku many thousands of good people still dress as their ancestors did before America was discovered. As I sat one evening in my French Hôtel d'Europe, eating a Russian dinner, I overheard a group of English engineers discussing the merits of oysters. They warmed my patriotic heart not a little by the favour with which they mentioned Blue Points and Lynn Havens, though they ended by giving the palm to a certain unpronounceable mollusc of Rio de Janeiro. Later I came to know one of those engineers very well, and he told me that in spite of Giosafat Barbaro and

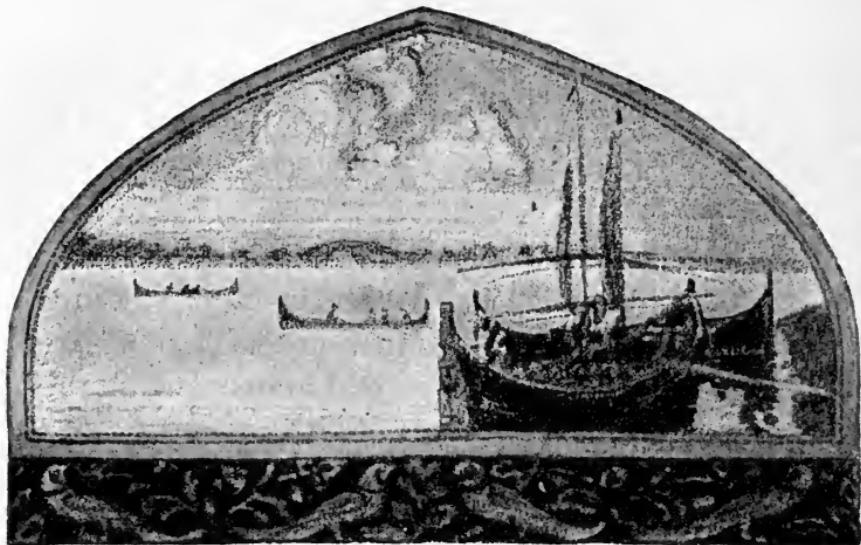
PERSIAN MINIATURES

the Zoroastrians, Baku did not begin to bustle until about thirty years ago. Then it was a ruinous village of Tartars and Persians, together with other ingredients of the usual Caucasian pie. One day a Russian officer took it into his head to buy some land there for a farm. Having bought his farm, he presently found out that nothing would grow on it. Wherever he ploughed, moreover, a disgusting black liquid would ooze out of the earth, and nothing could drain it away. Of these matters he made bitter complaint to an Armenian, offering him the farm for an extremely small sum. The Armenian kindly consented to take the place off his hands, having a suspicion that that black liquid would bear looking into. That suspicion made the Armenian a millionaire. The Tartars and Persians who owned most of the rest of Baku had suspicions of another kind when other people tried to buy their land, and for a long time they wouldn't sell. In the end, however, they became millionaires, too. They couldn't help themselves. And that is why Baku is so amusing. The Russian and Armenian millionaires go away, like the millionaires of Pittsburgh. The Tartar and the Persian millionaires don't, having no idea what on earth to do with their money. So they roll around Baku in such automobiles as these mortal eyes have ne'er beheld, painted the most recondite colours, gilded, jewelled, bearing passengers with sleepy or with boiling black eyes as the case may be, with all the noses of Asia, with beards that as often as not are dyed scarlet with henna, with such headdresses as never were seen on sea or land. They also go to the movies, marvelling over the manners and morals of Europe and the New World as exhibited to them in the

CAUCASIAN PROLOGUE

films of Pathé and Charlie Chaplin. And for them are the shops of Baku stuffed with every gimcrack that the heart of man can desire—provided he wants to pay for it ten times as much as he would in Pittsburgh.

It was the middle of November when I arrived in Baku, but it was still warm enough for the band to play in the park. That park is the quintessence of Baku. It is not a very leafy park, even in midsummer, for nothing will grow in it except in tubs of earth imported at vast expense. Neither is there anything wherewith to water those tubs except by distilling, again at vast expense, the greasy gray-green mixture of salt and oil that fills the shallow basin of the Caspian Sea. Nevertheless, it is a very agreeable park, laid out at length on the edge of the water. There are trim sanded paths, there are showy casinos, there are boat-houses and bathing-houses, there are above all Russian caps set on more kinds of heads than I can begin to catalogue. There are also hats, and turbans, and woolly *kalpaks*, together with coats of many colours, and rows of cartridge cases, and wonderful daggers, and more wonderful ladies, attached or otherwise, and heaven knows what. And as they move to and fro on the trim sanded paths, or lounge on the wooden benches, a band better than ever I heard in New York plays Verdi and Wagner and Bizet and Glinka and Chaikovsky. And at last, there on the edge of nowhere, the electric lights come out with a pop, and far away, over the dark Caspian, a slow moon climbs out of Samarkand.



II

ANABASIS

*We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go
Always a little further: it may be
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow,
Across that angry or that glimmering sea. . . .*

J. E. Flecker: THE GOLDEN JOURNEY TO SAMARKAND

I

FROM the deck of the unsteady little paddle-wheel steamer that churned out of the bay toward a low red moon we looked our last on Baku—a receding crescent of lights accented at one end by a dark hill and at the other by the angry glare of the oil fields. Then we went down to a portentous Russian dinner. At the head of the table sat a grave Lettish captain who at once made me conscious of all I

ANABASIS

had missed by never embarking on the Caspian before. Beside him sat the tall Swede who on the Black Sea had formed such a predilection for my steamer chair, and who now looked at me through his monocle with immense disdain. It appeared that he was going to Persia to be an officer of gendarmes. Opposite him sat a Belgian customs inspector and his family, also bound to the same country for the first time. Then there were two handsome Russian officers, two frock-coated Persian Khans with black pill boxes on their heads, and our three selves, who came from yet more distant portions of the earth. It was polyglot, it was pleasant, and after dinner Madame l'Inspectrice sang us some charming French songs. I shall not try to pretend that I was too world-weary to be taken in by it all. As a matter of fact, I was delighted. But I was also able to perceive that we might just as well have been on the Black Sea or the Baltic.

The next morning, however, the Caspian really looked as the Caspian might be expected to look. It was the same greasy greeny gray, and birds that should fly over no true sea fluttered about the chopping side-wheeler or even lighted on it, playing hide and seek with belted Russian soldiers who tried to catch them in their hands. We passed a full-rigged ship, too, stubby and black, with a square counter that came out of no yard of born shipwrights. It was such a ship as Master Anthony Jenkinson might have set sail in from the mouth of the Volga upon the disastrous affairs of the Muscovy Company. Then, about noon, the bank of gray in the south began to resolve itself into a rampart of cloud that grew taller and solider as we chugged toward it. And at last a semicircle of trees

PERSIAN MINIATURES

pricked the edge of the sea, making the rampart behind it higher and more tenebrous than ever.

"What is that?" cried the Belgian lady of the captain; who paced back and forth near us, grave as ever and a little grim.

"It is Persia," he answered—like that, as if Persia were an every-day affair.

"And when shall we smell the roses, and hear the nightingales?" pursued his pretty passenger.

The captain waited a discreet moment before answering cryptically:

"Madame perhaps forgets that it is November. We shall arrive in an hour or two."

He pursued his walk, leaving me to consider the grim case of the Belgian lady. Of Persia I knew no more than she, but of certain regions contiguous thereto I knew a little, and I trembled for her. What I really found myself considering, however, was that rampart of growing grimness that towered across the south, unbelievably high, increasingly seamed and patched with shadows of green and white. Such a coast as that, at any rate, I had never seen in my life. The prickly trees on the horizon grew taller and darker, they somehow established a connection with the stupendous mountain chain behind them, and at last we slid between two long wooden breakwaters into the still lagoon of Enzeli.

At sight of it that unhappy Belgian lady burst into tears. I knew much better than if she had told me that she had seen precious things in museums, that she had read an expurgated edition of the "Arabian Nights," and that she expected palaces of porcelain set among roses and night-

ANABASIS

ingales, with no doubt a palm or two in the background, a camel in the foreground, and who knew what else? Perhaps an elephant, or an ibis standing on one leg in a pool of lotuses. It may be that if I had been booked to live in Enzeli, like Madame l'Inspectrice, I might have burst into tears, too. As it was I found the lagoon of Enzeli a highly pleasing place, with its gray sheen framed in trees with its quaint, unpainted row-boats turned up at either end; with its junk-like ships moored along the low shore, and its encircling houses of weathered wood, rather scattered, of which the most pleasing had steep thatched roofs.

Leaving the larger town of Enzeli at the right, we sidled up to the opposite edge of Kazian. There we were immediately boarded by a swarm of bare-legged ruffians who chattered, to my immense astonishment, in a language perfectly unintelligible to me. They drawled or whined, rather, in a way that reminded one a little of Naples; but there was nothing else familiar about them except the leather humps on their backs, whereon they proceeded to balance our trunks. Some of them looked as if they might be kin to the Tartar porters of Baku. The flapping clothes of these had once been white, and they wore dusky skull caps of the same material. Others covered their hair with a kind of sheepskin muff, sewed up at one end. But the rags of most of them were dull blue or green or russet, girdled at the waist and skirted to the knee, and they contrived to keep on their heads an astounding erection of black or brown felt, shaped rather like a boiled auk's egg with the small end chipped off.

These picturesque individuals piloted us and our lug-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

gage to a big archway opening into an interior court of the custom house. True, we had inadvertently thrown our checks overboard; but on the Caspian what is a little matter of receipts, between friends? In that archway our passports were duly examined by a superb personage in a long coat and a black pillbox adorned with the lion and sun of his country in brass. If he had followed the dictates of his own dark heart he would doubtless have looked into our trunks; for I could see he was dying to know what on earth we had in so many bags, boxes, bundles, and other receptacles beginning with *b* and other letters. But since we were the travelling companions of a Belgian customs inspector, and since my friends were well known to his own Belgian chief, we were passed through with no more than an interval for me to admire the passengers who sauntered off the Russian boat with gay saddlebags and painted wooden trunks. There were also two distinguished looking English ladies whom I had not seen on board. One of them sat like a symbol of her empire on a stout metal box so appropriately labelled, in big white letters, IRONSIDES, that I very nearly smiled at her like a bounder. Then we climbed a flight of stairs to thank the Belgian customs inspector for his courtesy. We found him in a cosy *salon* full of rugs and Persian bric-a-brac and talk about aniline dyes and the export duty charged on carpets containing them. This gentleman also had a pretty French-speaking wife, upon whose sympathetic shoulder our own Belgian lady was drying the tears of her disillusionment. And so, separating ourselves from all but our lightest luggage, we hopped into a funny little victoria and drove away to Resht.

ANABASIS

II

Resht is an example of the unwillingness of the East to change its habits. Resht is an important city, capital of the rich seaboard province of Gilan. Yet because the sea has never meant anything to a Persian, and because the caravan roads naturally take the inner side of the lagoon, Resht grew up out of sight of the Caspian. In the good old times those who insisted on doing so took ship to Enzeli, just as you do now. But at Enzeli they embarked in one of those turned-up boats, sailed across the lagoon, and rowed or got themselves towed up a river to within a mile or two of Resht, where—after paying all the gold of Ophir to get themselves transported into the town itself—they really began their journey inland. Now you still begin your real journey at Resht. In the meantime, however, the Russians have built a macadamised road around the lagoon.

Beside it ran a pair of Décauville rails, which at that time shared with a short line running between Tehran and one of its suburbs the honour of being the only railroad in Persia. And Persia is bigger than Alaska, about as big as California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas put together—or France, Germany, Austria, and Italy. But for my own part I was enchanted to be in a carriage rather than in a compartment. That Décauville track, moreover, and one or two auto-busses that whizzed past us, interested me infinitely less than the flat country through which we drove at the end of a mild gray afternoon. It grew woodier as we left the sand dunes and the Caspian behind us. A cormorant or two flapped away across marshes of plumy reeds. Crows

PERSIAN MINIATURES

flew up from bare rice fields crisscrossed by causeways of earth. Still streams wound away among poplar trees that had not yet lost their last leaf. Under them thatched wooden shanties stood on stilts. And we passed any number of woolly little black cows with humps on their shoulders, just as you see in pictures of India. Those cows gave me only the first of many subsequent hints that if Persia reaches out one hand to Turkey, she stretches the other toward that land so much older and more remote.

On the farther side of a wooden bridge, under which a turned-up boat paddled off between reeds and rice fields, our driver proceeded to initiate me into the most deep-rooted of the customs of Persia by stopping at a half-way tea house. Picture not to yourself, however, any lady-like establishment of linen-covered tables, trim waitresses, and Dresden china. This was a thatched house on stilts, like the others along the road, open in front to the world and presenting to our admiration a row of legs more often bare than not, a line of auks' eggs—one or two with a neat round indentation in the top—and a succession of long black pipes, together with splashes of russet, green, and blue, a casual glitter of brass, and a quantity of what might have been whiskey glasses, containing about three fingers each of nothing stronger than tea. They also contained plenty of sugar, as I presently had occasion to find out, and perhaps a sliver of lemon. But milk—Heavens, no! The Sahib—or the Sah'b, as the coachman and everybody else in Persia seemed to call the head of our small party—told me that those black pipes were more than likely to contain opium. And he went on to narrate enlivening tales of what some-

ANABASIS

times happens to carriages in Persia when their drivers smoke too long at a tea house.

Our driver happily did not, and at nightfall we drew up in front of the *chapar khaneh*, the post-house, of Resht. Upon this post-house, its immense eaves, its balconies hanging on nothing, and its archway leading into a dark inner court, I gazed with an intense, a pathetic, interest—such is the power upon certain innocent spirits of things seen for the first time. I had, indeed, seen a post-house before, but never one that had the dignity of a national institution or of a lineage that stretched back unbroken to the time of Achæmenian kings. The Sah'b in the meantime engaged himself in a long and somewhat heated colloquy with the *naib*, the deputy road master to be found in every post-house. During this unintelligible conversation there continually popped up the esoteric word *asp*. Now an *asp* never reminds me of anything but Cleopatra and her monument, to say nothing of her woman Charmian; and what on earth had those good Egyptians to do with a journey into Persia? It appeared that they had a good deal; for an *asp*, pronounced almost exactly as in English, is in Persian a horse. Moreover, the *naib* swore he could give us none till he had sent the Russian mail on to Tehran. And it was very heavy to-night. Apparently, therefore, there was nothing for us to do but to climb the open wooden stair leading from the court to the upper gallery of the *chapar khaneh*, to enter a room furnished with two beds, a long table, a quantity of rugs, and a balcony, to eat such meats as the *naib* had at his disposal, and to wait until horses were sent back from the next station up the road.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

There might, indeed, be something else to do, thought I in my secret heart—even after the Sah'b assured me there was nothing to see in Resht. Perhaps! But what if your theory of life happens to be that there is something to see everywhere? What if you have just set foot, for the first time in your life, on the virgin soil of Persia? What if you find yourself in an inn at the edge of a Persian town, which lies somewhere beyond the balcony in the dark, which fills the night with strange sounds and smells and possibilities, and which you would mightily like to prowl in, to say nothing of spending a night in and looking at by daylight? What, however, could I do? I had cheated the Sah'b and the Khanum, by a too literal reading of a friendly invitation, out of a Golden Journey to Samarkand. It was not for me, therefore, to hinder them from hurrying as fast as asps would carry them to a brand-new house in Hamadan. And, after all, there were enough characteristic things to see in my first *chapar khaneh*. One of them was the exchanging of our handy Russian money for a sack of Persian two-*kran* pieces, worth some eighteen cents each, which with the cartwheel *tomans* that it needs ten *krans* to make, and the tiny *shabis* of which there are twenty in a *kran*, constitute the sole coin of the realm. Then came the affair of buying our "ticket" for Hamadan. It cost, for the use of one carriage and the four horses necessary to draw it 250 miles, together with the incidental toll charges of the Russian road, not far from \$100. Evidently one would have to think twice before travelling in Persia, thought I, who dreamed of Isfahan and Shiraz. True, three persons, or as many more as can squeeze into one carriage, pay no more than one; but even so it struck me

ANABASIS

that in some other parts of the world \$33 might take one considerably farther than 250 miles. However, we proceeded to follow a lantern into a huge shadowy stable at the back of the court where we picked out our carriage for the journey. It was a big rattlety-bang landau, patched and scratched beyond belief, that might almost have come down itself from Achæmenian times. I thought so all the more when the Sah'b told me that the contractor who ran this particular post road for the Russians was a Parsee.

The night began to look darker than ever when the Russian consul telephoned to the *naib* for another team of horses—though handful was what he really said. He telephoned, mind you! In Persia! The *naib* telephoned back, at the top of his voice, that the only handful of asps he had was engaged. The Russian consul, not suspecting that a newly arrived fellow-countryman of Mr. W. M. Shuster, at the other end of the line, was highly interested in this practical aspect of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, replied that it did not matter: asps he must have. He was of course within his rights, for this is a Russian road. Nevertheless the Sah'b, as a subject of a friendly semi-allied Power, and as a frequent client of the road, went over to interview the Russian consulate. The Russian consulate, as the paramount Power in north Persia, stuck to its guns, saying that the mail had precedence over all travellers and that the *naib* had no business to sell us a ticket on Wednesday night. So the subject of the semi-allied friendly Power came back eating enraged cow, as the French saying goes. And we sat twirling our thumbs while the mail jingled away to Tehran and beyond the balcony invisible Resht filled the night with romance.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Hard on midnight, when we got tired of twirling our thumbs and began to think we might better go to bed, the *naib* suddenly produced horses. Out of the lamplit room, down the wooden stair, into the mud puddle at the bottom of it, through the smokily lighted arch of the post-house we hastened, and prepared for flight. There was something dark and furtive about this hasty midnight departure that reminded me of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, when they fled away to Varennes in that *berline* of Carlyle's. Into our *berline* we crammed all the luggage we could between the seats, over the whole affair we spread rugs and cushions so as to make a species of bed, and the Sah'b and the Khanum, like King Louis and Queen Marie, settled themselves with what ease they might in this Persian sleeping car, while I, an elderly Dauphin, headed the opposite way, stuck my legs between them. Then the *mekhter*, the post-boy, appeared with the long-awaited horses—and when I saw them I didn't wonder that they were called asps!—an auk's egg with a sleepy driver under it mounted the box in vast disgust, and away under a cloudy moon to Varennes, or Hamadan, we began to roll.

III

King Louis and Queen Marie would no doubt have been highly amused had they known how thrilling to the Dauphin seemed this mild adventure, how strange the gray moonlight and black trees of which he caught glimpses through the window of the *berline*, how romantic the jingle of bells that kept growing louder or fainter through the dark, how impossible to close one's eyes upon one's first journey in Persia. Between two and three o'clock

ANABASIS

in the morning the *berline* halted at the first stage of our anabasis. This was at an invisible place called Kudum, six parasangs out of Resht. I was delighted to meet an old friend in so unexpected a spot. For you are to know that a parasang is no invention of Xenophon, but a word still used in Persia to measure distances, under the Arabized form of *farsakh*. It is, however, a somewhat vague term, being according to different authorities the distance at which you can see a camel and distinguish whether it be white or black, the distance at which you can first hear the roll of an approaching drum, or the distance which a loaded mule can travel in an hour. It varies accordingly from two to five miles. In this case six *farsakhs* is equal to sixteen miles.

There was a sound of voices, of horses being unharnessed and led away. Then a *kola*, which is the true name of a Persian auk's egg—or any other hat, for that matter—darkened the window, and a post-boy drawled very distinctly the two syllables:

“*Mal nist.*”

These mysterious words elicited such sounds of desperation from the *Sah'b* that at first I couldn't get out of him what they meant. It finally appeared that they meant “there is no property,” and that on the road property and asps are interchangeable terms. Expostulation was of no avail. Bribery was of no avail. The post had just gone on in four, no in five, gharries—*gari* is a true Persian word—and there *was* no property—for impatient subjects of friendly semi-allied Powers or even for fellow-citizens of Mr. W. Morgan Shuster. There would be no property for an hour, or at most an hour and a half. So there was nothing for it but to snooze pleas-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

antly in the *berline* while carts rattled by on the Russian road, while strings of mules and donkeys went by with much jingling of bells, while caravans went by, real caravans of real camels, slouching dimly past to a extraordi-narily broken music of different-toned bells. Beside them dark figures trudged silently. I thought of that wretched Belgian lady and smiled, secretly, at my own foolishness.

The next thing I knew it was past five in the morning, twice the hour and a half the *mekhter* had promised, and we were still standing serenely in front of the post-house at Kudum, without property and without prospect of property. As the Sah'b showed no sign of being conscious of this intolerable situation, I crawled gingerly out of the *berline* to stretch my cramped legs. A vague figure materialised off the ground behind us and walked away. Other vague figures trudged down the road, *kola* on head and bag or tool on shoulder. It was beginning to get light, and it drizzled a little. Events of the deepest significance for one's first morning in Persia! "Call the *mekhter*," suddenly suggested the Sah'b out of the *berline*. Having no other means of communicating with a *mekhter*, I proceeded to pound on the closed shutter of the post-house. After a time the shutter was withdrawn, a greasy *kola* stuck part way out—and nothing more happened.

In the end, of course, it was the Sah'b who got us out of Kudum. Once under way, we soon began to climb—into a country of hills and woods that gradually narrowed to the valley of a river. Sefid Rud is the name of it, or White River. I smiled again, thinking of another White River whose valley in Vermont I have long known.

ANABASIS

The Persian White River is a much bigger stream, flowing where first I saw it in a wide, sandy channel, and its valley is on a more heroic scale. The sky cleared as we went on, and we caught glimpses in front of us of the huge mountain wall of Elburz, with scarfs of cloud drifting across its incredible heights. But the lumber rafts floating down on the current, the colour of the autumn foliage, the ferns and brooks beside the road, and the talk of my two companions, made it hard to believe that we were really in Persia. No Vermonter, to be sure, would ever walk abroad like the peasants we met in such rags of such faded blue. The women's rags were gayer, and they often carried a child on their backs. Gayest of all were the high two-wheeled carts we passed, with hoop tops, and the bigger four-wheeled gharries, with passengers sitting on piles of boxes and bales. And the harness of their horses was bright with brass and with dangling tabs of brilliant wool or polished metal. The *khans* and tea houses along the way, for the use of such travellers as do not travel post, were of the now familiar peaked gray thatch. And we passed a camp of camels, which always travel at night except in cold weather. Their packs and pack-saddles lay scattered on the ground and the big beasts crouched in rows or circles, munching hay as superciliously as if it had been Nesselrode pudding. But while I knew in my heart that under these casual unfamiliarities life is after all life, whether in Persia or Vermont, and that a man will probably find out more about it by sticking to his own valley, I somehow derived an immense inner satisfaction from the mere fact that this was Persia and not Vermont. On such simplicities hangs the happiness of man!

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Suddenly, toward noon, just before we reached the post-house of Jamshidabad, a strange thing happened. We had been climbing steadily through autumn woods, with the picture growing increasingly clear in front of us of the northern wall of Persia, to say nothing of the problem of getting over it, when, at a turn of the road, woods, autumn leaves, the very trees, disappeared as if by magic. We had the better opportunity to take in this extraordinary change because, again, there was no property at Jamshidabad. However, if all the post-houses of Persia were like Jamshidabad the fashion of driving in day and night might become less popular than it is. The rugs on the brick floor looked clean enough to sleep on—though the real proof of that would be to try it! Behind the house opened a little walled quadrangle, cut into quarters by two transverse paths, with flower beds in each corner and a round brimming pool in the centre. We lunched on the porch in front, looking down on a wide, sandy valley of parted water, some of the threads steely bright, others strangely blue. The opposite slope of the valley was cleft by a ravine whose mouth was stopped or deflected by a flat hill spur. We amused ourselves by building castles there, within hearing of the river and in sight both of the green lower region of woods to the north and of those higher and barer peaks of the south toward which we were bound.

It was the middle of the afternoon before we succeeded in getting away from Jamshidabad. The road houses of the bleak country into which we now began to penetrate farther indicated the suddenness of the change from the lower valley. They no longer had thatched or peaked roofs, but flat ones of mud. All the more surprising, there-

ANABASIS

fore, was it, after having begun to get used to this timberless land, to dip down to the river again and discover a plantation of olive trees. Such tall and bushy olive trees, too, I never saw in Greece or Sicily. As a matter of fact, they were planted, the Sah'b told me, by veritable Greeks, who form quite a colony at Resht and who cannot exist without the olive oil which forms no part of the Persian menu.

There at Rudbar we changed horses again and rattled away through a long village street dimly lighted by a few lamps but allowing one to catch vague moving pictures of shops, tea houses, smithies, and an American sewing machine which had somehow found its way into the Greek olive grove of that Persian valley. Beyond the olive trees the valley narrowed to a black gorge, where the air at last began to feel like the end of November. And the wind blew so hard, especially when we crossed the river on a long Russian bridge, that we were glad enough to get out at the post-house of Menjil, just beyond, and drink some scalding tea. Menjil is, so to speak, another White River Junction; for three valleys come together there, and a caravan trail, not carriageable—as the French and Italians conveniently say—follows the Sefid Rud part way to Tabriz, while the main road presently branches off to Tehran.

The latter was the one we followed, through a high, dark, windy land of stars, with water somewhere in the bottom of it. I caught the pallor of that water, and the delicious sound of it, when we stopped at midnight at a post-house appropriately named Bala Bala, which means High High. Louis and Marie Antoinette slept like reasonable beings, having enjoined me when I got out to stretch my legs to

PERSIAN MINIATURES

see to it that the *naib* kept his word and brought us asps in twenty minutes. The twenty minutes passed, and the half hour, while I, false friend, dallied to admire a caravan that jingled up out of the dark in front of us. I could make out the shapes of curved necks, high-piled bales, and marching men, that passed to a strange accompaniment of bells. This obbligato seemed to play in a chord of four notes, of which the loudest and deepest was also the rarest. The caravan rounded the curve of the *chapar khaneh*, jingled off up a black side ravine, jingled back more softly on the upper side of the tilted hair-pin bend, and finally made away *diminuendo* in the direction of Menjil, the bells growing fainter and fainter till there was nothing to hear but the rush of the water in the dim valley below. Near by, in the post-house, I could see our driver and the *mekbter* and half a dozen ragamuffins among whom might or might not be our new driver, drinking tea and smoking those straight black pipes—with enough opium in them, perhaps, to make them indifferent as to whether they stayed on the road or pitched over a precipice into the river. I watched and listened, lost to all sense of duty. But the Sah'b mumbled something sleepily out of the carriage and I, brought back at last to the realities of life, made such sounds to the *naib* that his post-boy presently brought us our handful.

One remembers the nights of life for reasons the most diverse; but among remembered nights I think I shall always include that particular one. The sky was so clear and the air, after all, so mild, that we had dropped the top of the *berline*. The wind in our faces was deliciously fresh, therefore, and as we lay comfortably tucked up in rugs and pillows we could open our eyes, without

ANABASIS

the slightest effort, upon the dark shapes of the mountains, the endless caravans we met or overtook, the moon that suddenly peered from behind some jagged height. It was amazing what a quantity of silver contrived to drip out of that dried-up little moon and what tricks it played in that wild pass Part of the magic, of course, was that I was only half conscious. But I remember waking up once, or passing from one dream into another, in a hollow enchanted with moonlight, where we stood still while invisible water rushed past us and somewhere over our heads echoed a long-drawn chime of camel bells.

IV

The second morning found us stranded again beside the road, in a barren place called Molla Ali, where the dawn broke over a background of the Venetian school. Near by were the same slim poplars of a few faded leaves, and in the distance were the same sharp blue peaks. They presently turned rosy, however. And what is more they stayed so, even after the sun had cleared the heights of Elburz and brought the world back to its normal colour. It was a stonier and loftier world than the valley of olive trees where the light had left us, made up entirely of ruddy rocks, cleft by deep canyons and overlooked by soaring crags where the road looped and zig-zagged in the most fantastic way. We gained the summit of one pass, only to plunge down again into new depths and narrower. In them, while we waited for horses at the post-house of Yuz Bashi Chai—a perfectly authentic Turkish name meaning Captain's Brook—a caravan of Canterbury pilgrims, or pilgrims from Kerbela rather, was good enough to ride under the terrace on which

PERSIAN MINIATURES

we kicked our heels. A Persian Wife of Bath was one of the most conspicuous figures in the cortège, being enveloped from top to—well, not quite to—toe in a shapeless black domino which I believe they call a *chader*. As she rode astride like the men, we had no trouble in seeing her toes, which were encased in emerald green stockings that were apparently a part of some wonderful trousers she wore. And the face of the poor wretch was completely covered by a thick white cloth which had in it only a strip of open-work embroidery in front of her eyes for her to look out of. Other ladies, who had small children with them, sat on little railed platforms slung on either side of a mule's pack saddle. Is not such a platform what used to be called a cacolet, before the word and the convenience passed out of use in our part of the world? And still others crouched uncomfortably in a double litter which the Persians name a *kejaveh*, a sort of domed cage or kennel mounted in pairs on a pack animal.

From the Captain's Brook we climbed again, this time to the real top of the pass, 7,000 feet above the Caspian—though the Caspian, you remember, lies a little lower than the Black Sea. A sort of bare plateau was here, overlooking various branching valleys and overlooked in turn by loftier snow peaks of Elburz. That northern rampart of Persia is really the most imposing range in Asia, after the Himalayas, though here it reaches a height of no more than ten or eleven thousand feet. In this wild place we came upon the gravestone of a Russian engineer. "He who dies in a strange land dies the death of the martyrs," say the people of the Prophet. And indeed it must have been an unhomelike place for a son of the



PILGRIMS

PERSIAN MINIATURES

steppes to breathe his last in, among those remote heights whose older associations are all of the Fire Worshippers and of the gruesome order of the Assassins. But so many of our own race have left their bones in unlikely corners of the earth that we did not need to feel too sentimental about the engineer who lay on that great divide, among the rocks he had made passable for the feet of his countrymen.

From there on we descended, overtaking at Buinek another Russian, a live one, reported to us as having come up with the post. We looked darkly at him, suspecting him to be the guilty man for whom the consul at Resht had snatched our horses. However, there were soon better things to think about than our wrongs. For another brusque change brought us into a new country that opened in front of us almost as far as we could see, till the sunlight caught a white, upturned rim at its outer edges. "This," said the Sah'b, "is Persia." I looked at Persia with vast interest, thinking involuntarily again of our Belgian lady. There were certainly no roses or nightingales about, neither palaces of porcelain or so much as a camel. It was, though, a country of a kind I had never seen before: wide, flat, or at most sloping a trifle toward the east, tawny-coloured, with a tawniness that had an under-painting of pink in it, and walled on the north by the snowy serrations of Elburz. They looked less formidable than before, and with good reason, since this side of the mountain is three or four thousand feet higher than the other. But what struck me most was the light that lay over the land, of utter clearness, yet not hard or cold, and indescribably serene.

As we rolled down the long, tilted plain I looked hope-

ANABASIS

fully for the white cone of Demavend—that not quite extinct volcano which towers 19,000 feet behind Tehran—in vain. But the city of Kazvin soon made something else to look for, darkening the tawny levels with its blur. The vicinity of it began to be indicated by the look of the fields about us, by thickening orchards and clumps of poplar trees. Then, as sunset started to do poetic things with the tops of the mountains, we saw above the trees a brown city wall, irregularly scalloped, and above the brown city wall two domes blue as jewels.



III

KAZVIN

Let me give you somewhat to memorise Casbyn, wherein have been acted many Tragick scenes, in their time very terrible.

Sir Thomas Herbert: SOME YEERES TRAVELS . . .

I

WE ENTERED Kazvin by a gateway which among gateways was a sight to see. The frame of wall about it was gaily faced with green and yellow tiles, which also encrusted the stubby pinnacles rising above the wall on either side. When I looked at those tiles again, in a more uncompromising light, I admitted to myself that I had seen much better tiles. But the quaint and decorative effect of them in the twilight should have consoled Madame l'Inspectrice for her porcelain palaces, as they made me forget the loss of Resht. Through that gate we

KAZVIN

clattered into a long street, not quite straight and only wide enough for two carriages to pass, which was crowded with strolling *kolas*. The lamps had just begun to twinkle in the little shops on either side, bringing out sudden glints of metal, spots of colour, shining eyes, shallow porticoes full of tea drinkers, big arches leading into dark courts, and upper balconies where one caught now and then the red glow of a pipe. These things and many more delighted me so much that I at once put up a petition to Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate, to the end that with heaves, glanders, and all other equine ills might be smitten the asps of the post-house of Kazvin.

The street presently split in two in front of a high mud wall, rudely crenellated like the wall of the city. This we proceeded to skirt, turning first to the right and then to the left, till we came out into such an esplanade as I have seen only in certain great western capitals. Humble New York, at any rate, has never been able to treat herself to such a perspective. At the end by which we entered it the crenellated wall gave place to a monumental white archway, looking down the length of the esplanade toward an imposing palace at the opposite end. We drove toward it, between lines of plane trees and locust trees still in the sere, the yellow leaf, that partly hid the low houses behind them. Arriving in front of the palace I had time to make out between the poplars surrounding it a lower arcade, an upper loggia, and certain fanciful decorations in coloured tiles, before we turned the corner of it. And I was wondering whether it were the governor's palace or the headquarters of the Russian commandant, when we suddenly drove

PERSIAN MINIATURES

through an arch into a brick court behind it. This porcelain palace, if you please, was the *chapar khaneh*!

Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate, heard my cry. At the Sah'b's anxious inquiry with regard to asps, the *naib* solemnly swore he had none. Now this was a patent and easily refutable contravention of the truth. At Kazvin, if anywhere, there are always asps; for at this halfway house the Russian road forks, one branch going east to Tehran and one south to Hamadan. But by the time the *naib* got around to confessing that, upon minute search, there might be found in his stables a jade or two, just returned starved and breathless from a journey of many parasangs, the good-natured Sah'b took pity on his passenger. He decided that a night in a bed might not, after all, be amiss after two nights in a *berline*.

At close quarters the porcelain palace looked a little less splendid than it first appeared at the end of its vista in the Persian twilight. Nevertheless, the white arcade opening upon the court, surmounted by an upper terrace, was highly effective. Within, two spacious brick corridors cut through the lower floor at right angles. An anxious underling in a long black coat and a tall black *kola* stepped forward to escort us to our rooms. The Sah'b's and the Khanum's was perhaps more luxuriously fitted out with rugs and sketchy toilet arrangements. What mine lacked in these humble conveniences it made up in its palatial size, in its glimpse of the esplanade through outer arches and poplars, and in its floor of square tiles—turquoise and dark blue, set obliquely to the lines of the room. And while I discovered to my sorrow that the bad Turkish which had proved vaguely intelligible to certain of the inhabitants of Baku and even of Resht

KAZVIN

produced nothing but blank looks upon the countenances of Kazvin, I did contrive at last to wash off some of the dust of the Russian road into a tin basin set on a chair.

Having ordered dinner, we took a stroll in the now dark esplanade. At our end of it a quantity of fruit and vegetable stalls were set up under the plane trees. Lanterns lighted the overhanging branches and obscurely made visible the tiny panes of certain high windows behind them, and brought a little colour out of pyramids of apples, melons, and grapes. The latter did not look quite like the ones which Sir John Chardin describes as “the fairest Grape in Persia . . . being of a Gold Colour, transparent and as big as a small Olive,” of which he further avers that “they also make the strongest Wine in the World, and the most luscious.” But it is a long time since the French jeweller of Isfahan saw them, and it was now November. So we treated ourselves to a long yellow melon, and after a look at the ghostly gateway at the farther end of the esplanade returned to our inn.

Dinner was somewhat provisionally served in a big brick room ornamented with Russian advertisements of beer, vodka, and agricultural machinery. The table-ware, moreover, was not quite of palaces, or even of third-class hotels in other parts of the world. But the feast itself left nothing to be desired—or so it seemed to us, who had not indulged in what might be called one square meal since we left our Caspian steamer two days before. And after it I, in spite of my propensity to prowl in strange towns at night, was good for nothing but bed. Yet even that night was not without its impressions. For twice before morning was I roused by an extraordinary uproar in the esplanade. It made itself vaguely known

PERSIAN MINIATURES

through my dreams of camel bells by a wild clamour of pipes, trumpets, and drums, blaring out something that neither was nor was not a tune. The first time I jumped up to look out of the window, seeing nothing but a smoky flare of torches in the distance. The second time I merely turned over in bed, saying luxuriously to myself: "This is Persia!" Strange what will exhilarate or console the heart of man! But I have no idea what it was. A wedding procession, perhaps? Or one of those wonderful orchestral performances, a *nakara*, that used to greet the rising of the Persian sun—and still may in some places, for aught I know? Or could it have been a dream of that picturesque orgy which honest George Manwaring describes in his account of the meeting between Abbas the Great and Sir Anthony Sherley in 1600? After a banquet in the palace of Kazvin and a festivity in the Bazaar, one feature of which were twenty dancing girls "very richly apparelled," the Persian king took the English adventurer on his arm and walked "in every street in the city, the twenty women going before, singing and dancing, and his noblemen coming after, with each of them one of our company by the hand, and at every turning there was variety of music, and lamps hanging on either side of their streets, of seven heights one above another, which made a glorious shew."

II

The next morning was a heavenly one, warm and clear, throwing such a light on Kazvin that the Sah'b—may his shadow never grow less!—who had known me too long to be ignorant of my simple curiosity about the outward appearances of life and my incurable habit of carrying a

KAZVIN

camera over my shoulder, postponed his first view of that new house in Hamadan long enough to let me prowl a little in the fallen capital of the Sophies.

Among the cities of Persia, Kazvin is by no means one of the oldest or of the most famous. Still, it is able to boast a reasonable antiquity, having been founded, as the story goes, by the Sasanian king Shapur the Great, who reigned from the day he was born in 309 to the day he died in 379. Kazvin entered upon a more authentic period of its history in the time of the Caliph Harun al Rashid, himself half a Persian, who built a mosque there in 786 and otherwise beautified the town. It had the honour to be captured some three hundred years later by the Old Man of the Mountain, chief of the order of the Assassins, whose modern successor is that loyal Indian personage the Aga Khan. Kazvin was captured again and all but destroyed by the Mongols in 1220. Enough was left of it, however, for Hulagu Khan to make his headquarters there in 1256 when he set about sweeping the Assassins out of their mountain eyrie of Alamut, in the Elburz, thirty miles away. Toward the end of the next century the place was again captured and destroyed by Timur and his Tartars. But in 1548 Tahmasp Shah, second of the Safavi dynasty, finding Tabriz a little too near the Turks for comfort, moved his capital to Kazvin. And during the next half century or so, until Abbas the Great decided that Isfahan suited him better, the city enjoyed the period of its greatest prosperity.

A number of celebrated Persians were born in Kazvin, among them being that half-fabulous fabulist Lokman, the Oriental Aesop, the historian Musteusi, the poet Kazvini, and the painter Mir Imad, whom Abbas the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Great caused to be put to death for a too witty poem. And they say that when the Indian Mogul Jahangir heard about it he burst into tears, crying out against the cruelty of the Persian Shah, whom he would gladly have paid for poor Mir Imad his weight in pearls! Many other renowned people have lived or died in Kazvin, and famous Europeans not a few have described it in their travels. Whether Marco Polo actually passed that way in 1280 I do not quite make out from his entrancing book. But the Spaniard Don Ruy Gonzalez di Clavijo, who went to Samarkand on an embassy to Timur in 1404, passed through Kazvin. Pietro della Valle stopped there in 1618. The English ambassador Sir Dodmore Cotton died and was buried there in 1628, as his companion Sir Thomas Herbert so inimitably relates. Sir John Chardin spent four months there in 1674. Master Anthony Jenkinson took up the affairs of the Muscovy Company with Tahmasp Shah in his new capital in 1562, followed by Arthur Edwards in 1566. And during the eighteenth century Elton, Hanway, and several other Englishmen connected with the British Russia Company might have been seen on that handsome esplanade.

Englishmen have always been great travellers and great writers of travels, and so many of them have walked the esplanade of Kazvin that I cannot begin to catalogue the associations it has with men of our race. Whereat let no American prick up patriotic ears. For when Sir Dodmore Cotton, for instance, died in the city of Tahmasp Shah my own ancestors had not quite made up their minds to move from Old England to New England; so that for Sir Dodmore Cotton and his contemporaries I have quite as close a fellow feeling as any Briton born.

KAZVIN

And among those contemporaries, among all the Englishmen indeed who have visited Kazvin, none makes a more picturesque figure than that Sir Anthony Sherley of whom I just spoke—unless it be his brother Sir Robert Sherley.

This Sir Anthony was, I fear, a sad dog, and one who might serve to point the moral and adorn the tale of a German historian of the British Empire. Requiring him, however, to adorn my own tale, I shall take pains to point out at once that he was discredited in his own day, which was much less squeamish than ours. And I shall add that even in his follies he illustrates the difference between the gentleman adventurer, that most typical of British products, and the equally characteristic German type of the secret agent. Sir Anthony was the scion of a country gentleman of Sussex, of whom the most that can be said is that he lived to see his three sons celebrated, in Shakespeare's lifetime, in a play called "Travailes of the Three English Brothers," and two of them "worn like flowers in the breasts and bosoms of foreign princes." He is also supposed to have suggested to King James I the idea of creating the order of baronets. For the rest, he was most successful in getting himself into debt. This trait was inherited in a conspicuous degree by the young Anthony. The latter went to Oxford long enough to acquire "the ornaments of a gentleman," and then opened the chapter of his adventures by accompanying the Earl of Leicester to the Low Countries, in that campaign of 1586 which cost Sir Philip Sidney his life. In 1591, going with Essex to the wars in France, Sherley got himself decorated for bravery by Henri IV—to the fury of Queen Elizabeth, who cried: "I will not have my sheep marked by a strange brand, nor suffer them to follow the pipe of a

PERSIAN MINIATURES

foreign shepherd!" This scrape and his marriage got him into so much trouble that in 1596 he sought peace on the high seas, setting forth with a small fleet of six vessels to capture from the Portuguese the island of Sao Thomé, in the Gulf of Guinea. Having raided the town of Santiago, in the Cape Verde Islands, he decided that the West Indies offered a more promising field for his worthy endeavours than the Gulf of Guinea, and he descended in turn on Dominica, Margarita, Santa Marta, and Jamaica—with little profit to the inhabitants and not much more to himself. Being deserted at Havana by his companions, he returned to England and engaged in a brief privateering cruise with his patron Essex. The latter then sent him to Italy to help Don Cesare d'Este gain the Dukedom of Ferrara. But this matter had been settled by the Pope before Sherley arrived on the scene. Our disappointed gentleman adventurer therefore consoled himself for a time by seeing the sights of Venice.

It was there that his thoughts were first turned toward Persia, by the merchants and travellers whom he met on the Rialto. Their accounts of the magnificence and liberality of Shah Abbas the Great so excited Sherley's sixteenth-century imagination that nothing would do but he must go there himself. To that end he gave out that Essex had sent him to make an alliance with the Shah against the Turks. And in 1599 he embarked at Venice with his younger brother Robert and some twenty-five English companions, together with an interpreter he had picked up in Venice, "a great traveller newly come from the Sophy's court, whose name was Angelo, born in Turkey, but a good Christian, who had travelled sixteen

KAZVIN

years, and did speak twenty-four kinds of languages." I know those good Christians!

Of the many strange things which befell this self-appointed embassy I cannot begin to speak. They were shipwrecked and shanghaied. They were robbed and imprisoned. They made the acquaintance of "a certain kind of drink which they call coffee: it is made of an Italian seed; they drink it extreme hot; it is nothing toothsome, nor hath any good smell, but it is very wholesome." They borrowed goodly sums from the factors of the Levant Company in Constantinople and Aleppo and from a Florentine in "Babylon," as our forefathers called Bagdad. Then passing through "Curdia, a very thievish and brutish countrie," they at last arrived in Kazvin. Abbas happened to be away on some military expedition, but Sherley was handsomely received by "the Lord Steward" and offered, in the manner of the time, £20 a day for his maintenance. When this sum was first brought him, Sherley magnificently pushed it aside with his foot, saying: "Know this, brave Persian, I come not a-begging to the King, but hearing of his great favour and worthiness, thought I could not spend my time better than come to see him, and kiss his hand, with the adventure of my body to second him in his princely wars." Which did not prevent brave Anthony from later accepting from the Shah all manner of splendid gifts, including "very faire crewel carpets."

When Abbas returned to Kazvin, Sherley and his company went out to meet him, as the Persian custom is: "First, Sir Anthony himself in rich cloth of gold, his gown and his undercoat; his sword hanging on a rich scarf to the worth of a thousand pounds, being set with

PERSIAN MINIATURES

pearl and diamonds; and on his head a tulipant according,"—*i. e.* a turban—"to the worth of two hundred pounds, his boots embroidered with pearl and rubies; his brother Mr. Robert Sherley, likewise in cloth of gold, his gown and his undercoat, with a rich tulipant on his head; his interpreter, Angelo, in cloth of silver, gown and undercoat; four in cloth of silver gowns, with undercoats of silk damask; four in crimson velvet gowns, with damask undercoats; four in blue damask gowns, with taffety undercoats; four in yellow damask, with their undercoats of a Persian stuff; his page in cloth of gold; his four footmen in carnation taffety." Was not that a sight to see? There was likewise something to see when Abbas made his state entry, preceded by twelve hundred men bearing human heads on the points of their pikes. Some also wore necklaces of ears, while others played on trumpets two and a half yards long. And the Shah lost no time in showing his English visitors their first game of Polo—played, I believe, on the esplanade. Sir Stanley Maude's officers perhaps lost as little time after their triumphal entry into Baghdad in playing a Polo match; but a ground for this old Persian game was first laid out there by the Caliph Harun al Rashid in the eighth century.

Sir Anthony was well born, and he must have been well made and well spoken, to have induced so many of the great of the earth to lend him money and send him on wild goose chases. Abbas was apparently enchanted with him. He gave him a written charter granting all Christian merchants in perpetuity the right to trade in Persia, together with freedom from customs and religious liberty. And five months after his arrival Sherley got himself sent back to Europe on an embassy from the Shah, ap-

KAZVIN

pointed to treat concerning that famous alliance against the Turks. In Moscow, where Sherley went first, he was badly received by Boris Godunov. But this is not the place to recount the long story of his other adventures. For I regret to state that he never returned to Persia or sent the Shah any report of his embassy. This was perhaps because he had been disavowed at home, where he never returned either. He continued to wander around Europe in pursuit of patrons and grandiose schemes against the Turks until, poor, garrulous, conceited, and discredited, he died in Spain in 1635.

When Sir Anthony went away on his mission for Abbas the Great, he left his younger brother Robert behind him as a hostage, Abbas promising "that he would use him as his own son, and that he should never want, so long as he was king of Persia." When two years had passed by, and no word had come from the faithless Sir Anthony, the Shah began to look askance at Robert. But the young Englishman, then no more than twenty-two or three, proved his own fidelity by fighting for the Persians against the Turks. For this service he was given a high command, and seems to have undertaken to reorganise the army, especially in the matter of artillery. Abbas further showed him his favour by renewing the charter of religious liberty first given Sir Anthony, by issuing an edict of a more substantial kind, declaring that "this man's bread is baked for sixty years," and by presenting Sherley with a Circassian wife, a relative of one of his own. And in 1608 the Shah sent young Sherley in turn on an embassy to Europe, which was so much more successful than the other that Sir Robert turned up again in 1615. The Circassian lady accompanied him on this expedition

PERSIAN MINIATURES

and both of them attracted the greatest attention wherever they went, as Sherley, in his character of Persian envoy, always dressed in the Persian manner and only consented to remove his turban in the presence of his own rightful sovereign King James I. But he does not seem to have accomplished anything very definite, even in England, where the Levant merchants objected to a mercantile treaty with Persia, on the ground that it would spoil their profitable Turkish trade.

At the end of 1615 Abbas sent Sherley abroad again. The most apparent results of this second embassy were that Sherley and his wife got themselves painted in Rome by Van Dyck. Those portraits were long visible at Petworth, and perhaps are yet. The mission was brought to an end in 1625 by the appearance in England of another ambassador from Abbas Shah, a Persian, who pronounced Sherley an impostor and struck him in the face when first they met. What in this cloudy affair militated most actively against Sherley, in the minds of his countrymen, was that he did not strike back! As there was no one in England competent to pass on the authenticity of Sherley's credentials, and as he insisted on his own good faith, King Charles I appointed Sir Dodmore Cotton as envoy to Abbas Shah and sent the three ambassadors packing to Persia—Sherley and the Persian refusing to travel in the same ship. And when they arrived in India in 1627 the latter committed suicide, thereby proving to his English companions that he dared not face the Shah in their company.

The Shah, for that matter, when they finally found him in his summer palace of Ashraf, north of the Elburz, confirmed Cotton in this opinion by the friendliness of his

KAZVIN

reception of Sherley. But Abbas was now an old man, near his own end, and during the thirteen years of Sherley's absence the government had fallen into the hands of favourites unfriendly to the Englishman. When, therefore, Cotton requested an official statement with regard to Sherley's credentials, and gave them up to be examined, the vizier of the moment again accused Sir Robert of being an impostor and refused to return the letters, finally saying that the Shah had destroyed them in a rage. This second affront was too much for the unhappy Sherley. He died not long after and was buried under the doorstep of his house, in that same city of Kazvin where he had been received with so much honour twenty-eight years before. What is more, Cotton himself died ten days later. As for Lady Sherley, the Circassian whom Van Dyck painted, and whom another painter, "one Iohn, a *Dutch* man," robbed with the connivance of the jealous vizier, she retired to Rome. Thither she caused her husband's remains to be transferred in 1658 and buried in the church of Santa Maria della Scala.

Of these matters and many others Sir Thomas Herbert, the associate and chargé d'affaires of Sir Dodmore Cotton, has inimitably written in his "Some Yeeres Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Affrique"—a book which so competent an authority as Lord Curzon calls "by far the most amusing work that has ever been published on Persia." I suspect that Chardin thought so, too, and borrowed more than one leaf from it. If I had not already given a little too much space to this Sherleyan interlude, I would like to follow Chardin's example. As it is, I can only quote what Herbert says about Sir Robert:

PERSIAN MINIATURES

"Hee was the greatest traveller in his time, and no man had eaten more salt then he, none had more relisht the mutabilities of Fortune. He had a heart as free as any man: his patience was more Philosophicall than his Intellect, having small acquaintance with the Muses: many Cities he saw, many hills climb'd over, and tasted of many severall waters; yet *Athens*, *Parnassus*, *Hippocrene* were strangers to him, his Notion prompted him to other employments: by *Rodulph* the Second hee was created a Palatine of the Empire; and by Pope Paul 3. an Earle of the sacred Pallace of *Lateran*; from whom he had power to legitimate the Indians; and from the Persian Monarch had enricht himselfe by many meriting services: but obtained least (as *Scipio*, *Cæsar*, *Belisarius*, &c.) when he best deserved and most expected it. Ranck me with those that honour him."

III

As soon as I saw the esplanade again, the Meidan-i-Shah as the Persians call it, by sunlight, I at once made up my mind—as I have similarly done a hundred times before—that nothing would please me more than to spend the rest of my days in Kazvin. Other esplanades, to be sure, may be carried out with a more grandiose perfection of detail. Yet it had never before been given me to behold an esplanade where strings of camels marched, perfectly at home, between yellowing plane trees, or under loggias with quite such an accent of slenderness and height. And the monumental triple white gateway at the farther end was really perfect of its kind. This *Ali Kapu* or Sublime Porte of Kazvin is all that remains of the old palace of the Safevis, which Chardin says was built by

KAZVIN

Tahmasp Shah on the plans of a Turkish architect, and enlarged by Abbas the Great. The doorway stands in a square white frame, taller than the wings on either side, recessed in a pointed arch and set off with a little blue tiling. No wonder George Manwaring, one of Sir Anthony Sherley's company, thought those tiles more precious than they are, and described them as "rich stones very bright, the like I think the world cannot afford!" What gives its particular air, however, is the stalactite groining of the recess, and a pointed window over the door, filled with an intricate grille of plaster. And on either side of it are two smaller arches, set one above the other, the lower a plain white ogive, the upper a larger ogive of stalactites, forming a railed balcony or loggia, in the back of which a door corresponds to the great window of the central arch. Seen in its perspective of plane trees, with the standard of the Lion and the Sun floating above it, the gateway produces an indescribable effect of strangeness and dignity. Over the door, according to Chardin, is written: "May this triumphant gate be always open to good fortune, by virtue of the confession we make, that there is no god but God." It opens, now, upon the headquarters of the Swedish gendarmerie!

There were other doorways to be seen in the esplanade, behind the trees, decorated with bricks and tiles in an interesting way. And I was struck by a stone head stuck in the upper cornice of a house, set off by a pair of horns. But what presently began to intrigue me beyond endurance was a green dome I could see above the house tops, while farther away were the tops of two blue minarets. I therefore set out in the southwesterly direction in which I saw them, and very soon lost myself in a maze

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of silent streets whose mud walls were too high and too close together for me to catch sight again of that tantalising green dome. I did discover, however, any number of admirable doorways, recessed in pointed arches of brick and set about with coloured tiles—generally very bad ones, truth compels me to add. The doors themselves were low and heavy, adorned with a fantastic variety of knobs, clamps, locks, and knockers. I also passed several dark arches from which steps or inclined planes led down into the bowels of the earth; and out of them men staggered with dripping goatskins of water. Some of these arches were very decorative indeed with tiles and stalactite vaulting, and perhaps an inscription of tile, or cut in pale stone, set above them.

And I did come at last upon those two blue minarets. They were not true minarets, being little turrets with a covered loggia at the top; for the Persian muezzins, unlike their Turkish cousins, call to prayer from the roofs of their mosques. This mosque lay so successfully hidden behind ruinous mud walls that I could catch only a glimpse of it from the rear. But that was where its great blue dome was best to be seen, crowned by a second tiny dome, set like a closed bud on the stalk of a high drum. This must have been one of the domes that caught my eye from the plain. What I had not distinguished then was that among its turquoise tiles were set smaller green and yellow ones, making a spiral pattern that waved up from a richly decorated base. I would have liked to think that this was the *masjid-i-juma* which Harun al Rashid left Baghdad long enough to build. None of the books I have read about Kazvin, however, give me much en-

KAZVIN

couragement for thinking so—or even that it was the *masjid-i-shah* begun by Ismail Shah, finished by Tahmasp, and restored by Agha Mohammed and Fat'h Ali Shah, founders of the reigning Kajar dynasty. These books of travel are all very well; but their writers rarely stay long enough in one place, or know enough of the language, to be satisfactory!

The other blue dome I finally found fronting a great space of sun on the south side of the town. It belonged, the dome, to a structure which I do not too confidently name; for so recent and magnificently published an authority as M. Henri René d'Allemagne identifies it, as I make out, with the *masjid-i-shah*. Whereas a passerby of whom I stammered inquiry in the matter made some reply about Prince Hosein. And in fact there is in Kazvin an Imamzadeh Hosein, the tomb of a two-year-old son of the Imam Riza whose mausoleum in Meshed is the most sacred place in Persia. That this building was a tomb rather than a mosque seemed further to be indicated by the circumstance that the open space in front of it was a cemetery. The ground was all strewn with flat and faintly sculptured stones, like that, with no rail or tree to guard them. On the side facing the great mausoleum were two lesser ones, as I judged—low, flat-roofed structures with pointed brick domes too small for them, their façades brilliantly tiled and containing ogival windows darkly screened by grilles in a wheel design of weathered wood. And besides the mausoleum, in the crenellated mud wall of the city, was another tiled gateway, like the one by which we had entered the night before. I went out of it for a glance at the rear of the mausoleum. It was broken, I found, by five deep white

PERSIAN MINIATURES

pointed recesses of stalactites, each looking at a different angle across the plain.

But I have not spoken of the façade, which consisted of three great tiled arches, the ogival recess in the centre being higher than the other two, surmounted by six tiled pinnacles. And behind them rose the pointed dome, of that form made familiar to all the world by the pictures of the Taj Mahal, blue as a turquoise and lightly decorated like the dome of my nameless mosque with waving spirals of green. What lay between I do not know. I had been warned not to pass the portal. The Persians, while less strict than the Turks in many respects, are more strict in not allowing Christians to defile their holy places. So I stood outside in the sun and thought I had never seen anything quite so jewel-like. If I had known the splendours of Cairo and Isfahan I might have been less moved. I remembered, too, that Pisa has something to show in the way of a sunlit place by a city wall. But in their dusty place without trees, in their tawny setting, in their untempered light, those tiles were like some fabulous and forbidden efflorescence of that lion-coloured land.

The Sah'b and the Khanum—may their shadows never grow less!—chided me not for my long absence. They even allowed me to loiter in that inviting street by which we had entered Kazvin while they acquired pistachio nuts, which are one of the specialties of the town, together with other things good to munch out of a bag while one sits in a *berline* and post-houses are far away. In the daytime, it is true, that street took on a semi-Europeanized aspect from its Russian and Armenian signs. The Sah'b, being a man of tongues, even encountered a cast-away Greek, who first nearly died of joy at the unaccus-

KAZVIN

tomed sound of his own language and then was ready to die of despair because the Sah'b had no time to gossip over a glass of mastic. There were also big Cossacks doing police duty, armed with bayonet and sabre. However, Kazvin will still take a deal of Russianising, as I saw for myself in the pot-shops I looked into, the sweet shops of unimaginable dainties, the glittering copper shops, the smithies full of the acrid smell of a forge. I poked my inquisitive nose, too, into more than one archway, coming once upon a circle of camels chewing the cud of bitterness in a galleried court, and again upon a novel process of rope-making, carried on between two wheeled contraptions in a bigger court of trees. What I liked best about that discovery, though, was the great tiled doorway at the farther end, and the ultimate pointed window whose grille let a little dusty light into the intermediate darkness.

I was not the one to complain when, in the *berline* again, we locked wheels with a gharry and had to be extricated by a Cossack as polite as he was tall. However, there is an end to all things. All too soon the Cossack, who was a little less polite to the driver of the gharry than he was to us, took away our last excuse for remaining in Kazvin, and we clattered out of the porcelain city gate.

IV

THE COUNTRY OF THE SKY

A journey is a portion of hell.

—ARABIC PROVERB

Hey diddle, didle, my son John !

One shoe off and one shoe on !

—MOTHER GOOSE

FROM the Resht road we branched off through a suburb of adobe walls and fruit trees not yet bare, across a dry gully like a Sicilian *fiumara*, past the scalloped mud battlements that looked as if Kazvin lay in no great fear of enemies, away from the two turquoise domes glittering behind them, into the empty plain. It slanted up a little toward a company of hillocks that huddled under a far white semicircle of mountains to the southwest. As we made for them a shrewish wind that is a specialty of this plateau caught us in the back, nipping the Indian Summer softness out of the air and reminding us, like those sharp snowpeaks, that winter was at hand. The mule trains we met were another reminder, for every pack animal carried a snow shovel or two.

For the rest, there was much less to see than during the first half of our journey. The traffic of the Russian road divides after it gets through the Elburz passes, and the caravans bound for Hamadan or Baghdad often find

THE COUNTRY OF THE SKY

the open plains easier going, or a shorter cut, besides being free of tolls. So we had the country pretty much to ourselves. Once or twice we passed a flat mud village crouching like Kazvin behind buttressed and crenellated adobe walls, but with no porcelain gates, alas, and no blue domes to catch an expectant eye. Otherwise the solitude was unbroken save by the paler streak of the road scarring the tawny wastes. Our chief distraction consisted in watching the camel-thorn—small, prickly brown balls of bushes that the Elburz wind would uproot and send spinning off across the table of the plain, one after another, as if in some mysterious game.

The post-houses, too, were farther apart than they had been. They were also more uniform and a little more ornate, being solidly built of yellow brick. The name of each one was posted over the door in Persian, Russian, and French. The sight of those Arabic, Slavic, and Latin letters keeping each other company in this Persian loneliness let loose in one's head all manner of ruminations, that went spinning even farther than the camel-thorn, though I fear to no more definite end. The *berline*, for its part, lumbered on to the end of the plateau, where huddled the bald brown hills for which we had been steering throughout an entire watch. We threaded a corner of this archipelago without much perceptible climbing, and came out into another solitary space of sun. Upon the white western wall thereof I gazed, like a true tourist, with the more respect when I heard that it was the outer rampart of Kurdistan. As for us we bore southward, changing horses the second time toward dusk, at Nehavend. No trouble about asps now, on this less-frequented road, with the post safely out of the way!

PERSIAN MINIATURES

But the sun made us no ceremonies to-night. He did not retire slowly, graciously, with the lingering farewell smile of yesterday. He abruptly disappeared, from one moment to another, as if slamming the door of the west behind him upon a land as bleak and barren as the dark o' the moon. And in the cheerless twilight we seesawed up and down toward a ghostlike barrier that towered between us and the south.

About nine o'clock we reached a chilly place of the comforting name of Ab-i-Germ, or Hot Water—from certain mineral springs that are a place of resort for rheumatic Persians. The post-house looked very cosy, too, with its lights and gay rugs. But the *naib*, deceitful man, had no hot water at all. Which was so reprehensible in a *naib* living at Ab-i-Germ that we refused to wait till he lighted a fire and put his kettle on, telling him to telephone ahead to the next station to have a samovar ready for us. So it was midnight before we tumbled out at Aveh, very cold and sleepy, for a belated tea. After that we seriously began to climb again, up and up between spectral heights, in the hearing of invisible water, toward snapping stars. There even began to be a pallor of snow beside us, so that my companions speculated a little as to what might happen at the top of Sultan Bulagh pass. They knew it of old, having once or twice stuck there in a drift. And they told me that the post is sometimes held up there for weeks at a time. For the top of that pass is not far from 10,000 feet above the Caspian. But what happened was that I, who had never soared so near the other world, and who might not have been in the best condition after three days of almost continuous jouncing in an antique *berline*, disgraced myself by falling

THE COUNTRY OF THE SKY

faint and having to be laid out in the snow beside the road with the Sah'b's pocket flask. And the rest of the night I filled the *berline* with ignoble snores, all unconscious of the wild shapes and astounding stars of that country of the sky.

It was upon a new heaven and a new earth that I opened my eyes next morning, when we drew up at the second station south of the pass. Sirab was the name of that post-house, which I believe means Mirage. Being somewhat subject to mirages myself, it may have been my imagination that added a purity to the air, deepened the blue of the fleckless sky, warmed the long-broken slope in front of us with a secret gold. But this land was certainly much nearer heaven than the one we had left, and considerably farther south—about as far as Gibraltar or Cape Hatteras. And it is not every day that one sees for the first time the sun of the Fire Worshippers rise over the rim of the Persian desert. However, as I took in this not altogether objective phenomenon I could make out that it was related to the brusque sunset of the evening before. The sky brightened, palpitated; the edge of the desert suddenly flashed into incandescence; the incandescence boiled and grew tumid till a bubble of intolerable gold surged clear of the plain: no moods, no glamours, none of that self-conscious inflammation of nature which attends the breaking or the fading of the light in more temperamental climates. It was like the solution of a problem by an intellectual mind, rather than any inspiration of romance or despair. And the look of the country contributed to this effect, with its long, simple, abstract lines, of a beauty entirely different from that of a land of trees.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

When I set about assisting at this spectacle more fully than was possible inside a closed landau, and to that end hunted for my shoes, I could find no more than one of them. Nor could anybody else. Whereat the dread truth burst upon me that the other must have fallen out by the wayside, who knew how many parasangs back, during my humiliating performances on top of the pass.

"Look here," I asked the Sah'b; "When shall I see my trunks again?"

"Oh, in about two months," answered the Sah'b pleasantly—"if they don't get stuck in the snow."

"Can one buy shoes in Hamadan?" pursued I darkly.

"Very nice ones," he replied—"red, yellow, purple, even bright green, and curly about the toes."

"The devil!" I burst out, very inappropriately for the holy Sabbath. "I've got nothing with me but a pair of patent leather pumps!"

"Never mind," the Khanum consoled me. "I'll lend you those new arctics I bought in Baku."

Such is Persia! However, I soon forgot my sorrows in another aspect of Persia that presented itself to our view as we rattled merrily southward under the mounting sun. This was a succession of block-houses, square mud towers with loop-holed roofs, each one standing in sight of the next and somehow giving, in spite of the telephone wires sagging between them, the distinctest of impressions that we had contrived to drop back from the twentieth century into the thirteenth. Out of a loop-hole would be sticking a rifle or a Russian-looking lamb's-wool cap—belonging, nevertheless, to a Persian gendarme who does his best to discredit Morier's famous quotation: "O Allah, Allah, if there was no dying in the case, how

THE COUNTRY OF THE SKY

the Persians would fight!" It was to assist in this worthy endeavour that my monocled Swedish friend had travelled down the Black Sea in my steamer chair. I ought to have been the more willing to lend it to him because my fellow-countryman Mr. Shuster had been the occasion of his going out to Persia. And that he might find something to do the Sah'b made the clearer to me by pointing out a line of low hills at our right and telling me about a Robin Hood of the region, named after the uncle of the Prophet, Abbas, who not so many months before had pounced out of those hills upon a messenger of the Imperial Bank of Persia, relieving him of the tidy sum of 17,000 *tomans*.

After that I regarded block-houses, loop-holes, and the trim blue gendarmes we met patrolling the road, with more interest than ever, to say nothing of the barren landscape around them. But nothing more startling did we see than certain great patches of blinding white in the ruddy dun colour of the plains, which gave one an excellent idea of what a salt desert must look like. Indeed the greater part of the country was no better than a desert, without a house, a tree, or a stream to see. What began to grow more and more visible in front of us was a tall, toothed silver mountain. And that, I learned, was Mt. Elvend, guardian of Hamadan and neighbour of that new house toward which we had been hurrying.

Of Hamadan itself, however, there was as yet no sign. Nor was there any till after we had passed, at noon, the last post station of Ag Bulagh. Then I discovered a peasant or two driving across the desert on a log of wood, harnessed to a minute ox. Although I was not a little astonished to find out that the peasant was harrowing a

PERSIAN MINIATURES

field, I was still more astonished to note that the ox had no hump. Those Indian-looking cattle all belong to the north side of Elburz—unless there be more of them in the extreme east and south of Persia. We also began to encounter tea houses once more, cubical ones of pinky-yellow mud, whose clients seemed not so busy sipping the glass that cheers as pursuing that more intimate occupation which the Khanum dignified with the title of The Chase. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! I have witnessed The Chase in the land where the citron blooms, but never have I seen it so popular, so passionate, or followed with so little false modesty, as in Persia. A village or two from which these huntsmen came were visible in the distance, too much the colour of the country to be very conspicuous, but marked by prickly plantations of poplars. And two huntsmen of a more picturesque sort kept us company for part of the way into town. One of them was a swarthy young man on a fiery stallion, who looked as if he might very well be a native of that village the Sah'b told me about, not far away, the inhabitants whereof, until discouraged by the gendarmes, used to make a handsome living by standing on a certain bridge of the Russian road and turning out the pockets of travellers. Every now and then he would dart off across the fields, standing in his stirrups and aiming his gun behind him as if to prove that the tradition of the Parthian shot is not yet dead in Persia. Upon the Sah'b asking him what he would take for his horse, he replied magnificently: "It is yours"—and galloped off again. His older companion rode a sorrier steed, his legs thrust into a couple of saddlebags. But such saddlebags, woven in the manner of fine rugs!

THE COUNTRY OF THE SKY

This part of the tilted plateau was much broken by hillocks, some of them so small and so regular in shape that they had rather the air of the tumuli of Thrace. They rather tempted one, too, to remember that Persians had passed through that corner of the world, and Greeks through this—until they suddenly parted, to let us down into a wide dip beyond. But what they really did was to treat me, for one, to that rare enough experience, a sensation. For the farther slope of the broad hollow into which we began to coast ended in the snow of Elvend, seven thousand feet above our heads, though nearly thirteen thousand feet in the Persian blue. The toothed range that wore the snow was of a ruddy purple in the brilliant afternoon light, curving nobly south and east in a great amphitheatre about more of a forest than I had seen since turning the corner of Jamshidabad. The trees of this forest were prevalently poplars, slim and bare as masts. And between them looked out tier on tier of flat adobe roofs, honey-coloured in the St. Martin's sun, not unsuggestive indeed of a wild honeycomb. Or it might be a wasps' nest, plastered on the lower buttresses of Elvend. Who knew? I had heard many savage things spoken of Hamadan. Nor was there any sign of turquoise domes. But if a town is capable of perching itself in such an amphitheatre as that, thought I, it can very well do without turquoise domes.

Traffic multiplied as we trotted on. Mud walls and orchards, nakeder than those of Kazvin, began to border the road. Presently four demure young men in long black coats and short black caps waylaid the *berline* and professed the Sah'b and the Khanum an eloquent Oriental welcome in a French of surprising fluency. Then a

PERSIAN MINIATURES

cavalcade of three nice-looking young Europeans, an Englishman, a Frenchman, and a Swiss, followed by three Persian grooms, cantered up to meet us. No: I made up my mind then and there that Hamadan was not a wasps' nest! Thus attended we splashed through a shallow stream, lurched uphill into tipsy alleys of mud hovels—where I noticed one or two built-in bits of Saracenic-looking sculpture. At last, having mounted a half moon to the top of the town, we drove down a lane between a high adobe wall and a willow-bordered field, passed a few tall brick gateways, and stopped at one more.

And so, with one foot in my own American shoe and one in a Russian snow-boot of the Khanum's, did I make my entrance into the hospitable Swiss bungalow where I spent my first night in Hamadan.

V

THE BAZAAR

*Hamadan is my native place: and I will say to its honour that
for ugliness it surpasses every other city of the world;*

*That its children have as many vices as its old men, and that
its old men have the judgment of children.*

BEDI-AL-ZAMAN AL HAMADANI

I

THEY tell me there is nothing to see in Hamadan.

I wonder! I can see for myself that there are neither blue domes nor porcelain gates. I

have also made another discovery. It is the more disconcerting because I have read in Prof. A. V. Williams Jackson's "Persia Past and Present" a poem by Mr. Clinton Scollard, of which every stanza returns in the last line to the walls of Hamadan. It therefore becomes my painful duty, as a spinner of literal prose, to point out that Hamadan has no walls—at least on our side of the town. Yet of private walls it has so many, hiding houses, courts, and gardens from the indiscreet curiosity of the passerby, that I ask myself if they can be right when they say there is nothing to see in Hamadan.

Nevertheless, it amuses me to go down town with the Sah'b. It is truly going down town, for we live on the lower edge of a suburb of gardens that slants from the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

mountains to the city. It amuses me the more because the rite of going down town is associated in my mind with boats, trains, trams, tunnels, and other devices of the West for cheating time. Whereas in Hamadan time claims his full due. To go down town, or to go to the Bazaar, as we say here, you may if you choose mount a horse. You may not, however, call a carriage. The streets are too narrow to drive in. The Sah'b and I, accordingly, walk. And so do most of the fifty or sixty thousand other Hamadanis. If the results of this wholesome exercise be not very favourable to the shine of our shoes or the crease of our trousers, it at least gives us a better chance to see how little there is to see.

The road outside our gate is at first a muddy country lane, enlivened by trees and a miniature brook that can never make up their minds which side to run. Presently the trees give it up, yielding their place to two blank mud walls. As for the brook, it decides to take the middle of the street, ferrying dead leaves, onion peels, and more equivocal relics to the unknown destination to which it finally vanishes under a wall. And it does not take me long to make out that the charms of Hamadan are not for the nostril. Was that what the more initiated poet whose distich I have put at the head of this chapter was thinking about? Mr. Clinton Scollard might think so, or my Belgian lady. Yet it occurs to me that such a person as the late M. Cézanne, for example, might note without disfavour the none too geometric line in which that dirty water flashes down the street, the inequalities of tone and surface in the irregular mud walls on either side, the contrast of their tawniness with the brilliant strip of blue overhead. I can also imagine a celebrated citi-



HAMADAN STREET

PERSIAN MINIATURES

zen of Lowell, Massachusetts, finding subjects to etch in these crooked perspectives, in the shops that occasionally break them with broad, overshadowing canopies of dried mud, propped up on leaning poplar poles; in the rough black arches through which an alley will suddenly plunge out of sight; in the flimsy balconies that give an accent all their own to a blind mud wall, or the rare windows that pierce it, high above the ground, filled with an infinity of little panes. But who, without glossing or vilifying, could evoke the true mud and cobblestones underfoot, the exact key of clear colour overhead, the complicated variation of smells about one strong acrid theme of burning camel dung?

The most architectural feature of these twisting cracks of sun and shade are the doorways. Some of them, indeed, bar the street itself, shutting off quarter from quarter at night or in times of disturbance. None of them can compare with the Sublime Porte of Kazvin, but all of them make a welcome break in the monotony of the endless mud walls and most of them are more imposing than the common run of street doors in Europe or America. A gateway, the Sah'b tells me, is the index of a man's importance in the world. And the humility of his own, together with the lack of any yawning underlying especially deputed to guard it, is what Hamadan finds not least astonishing about our new house.

Beside one low, heavy door, open upon darkness, quaint life-sized figures are frescoed: the sign of a public bath. Other signs are the striped towels hanging out to dry in the little square where three streets come together, the bulls' eyes of greenish glass in the mud domes of the roof, and a new smell. At any rate, it seems that Persian baths,

THE BAZAAR

unlike Turkish ones, contain a central pool, appropriately named the treasury, and that the water of this treasury is changed as seldom as may be! This news enables me to bear with better equanimity the further news that I shall never be allowed here, as I have been in Stambul, to pollute the interior of a bath with my presence.

The people we meet all look more alike than the people of any place I have seen for a long time. There is little of the colour I had expected—save when a company of mosstroopers clatters by on horseback, led by a fantastic individual in a tunic of peacock green velvet. His saddle is covered with a lattice-work of magenta brocade on white, and all of them rattle with weapons out of a museum. Otherwise everybody dresses very soberly, the men oftener than not in a loose brown cloak called an *aba* and a brown felt auk's egg, the women swathed from top to toe in a black or dark blue *chader*. It is impossible to tell one from another when their thick white veils are down. These have an odd triangular effect, being fastened around the crown of their heads, with a jewelled clasp at the back, and disappearing in front under the dark domino. But I notice that they like to throw their veils back when none of their own men are near. The consequent revelation of long black eyes and high, pink cheek-bones is not too upsetting! In fact, the men strike me as handsomer than the women. There are many bare legs and feet—too many to be comfortable, I am afraid, at 6,000 feet above the sea around Thanksgiving time. Yet one youngster patters after us stark naked, apparently less sorry for himself than he would have us believe. He belongs to the great army of beggars that lie in wait at strategic corners or follow one with

PERSIAN MINIATURES

hand outstretched, making piteous outcries which are full of the word *khoda*, God. They are a distressing spectacle, with their thin rags, their hideous deformities, their emaciated babies. However, you learn the more willingly how to put them off with a pharisaic "God be your keeper!" when you catch one laughing gaily with her neighbour and then bursting into dolorous sobs at sight of you.

Finally we reach the true boundary of the Bazaar, which is the river. I am willing to take Prof. Williams Jackson's word for it that this river is the Alusjird, though I never came across any one else who had so definite a name for it. I would be less willing to accept the picture of it which Prof. Williams Jackson and Colonel Sykes have borrowed from an old French traveller by the name of Eugène Flandin if I did not happen to remember the Envoi of "The Seven Seas," how Kipling says:

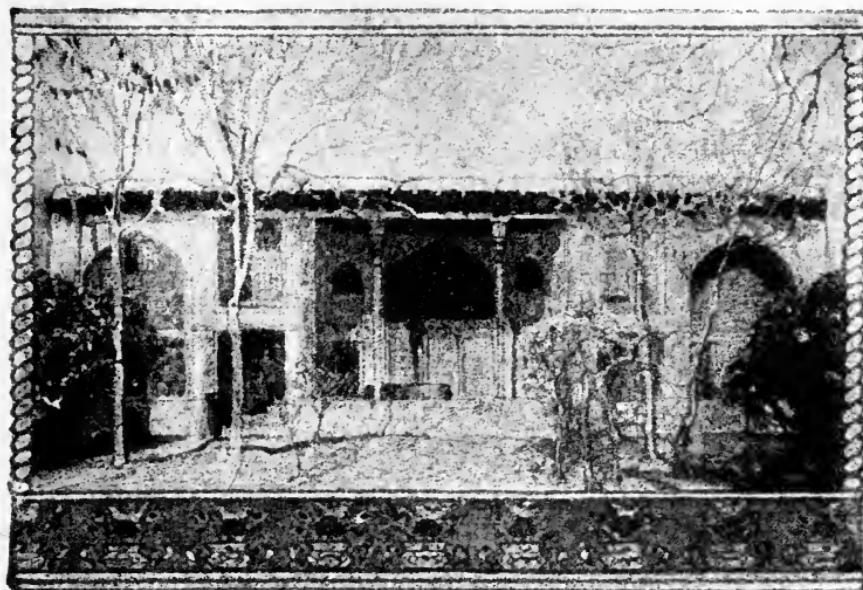
"each in his seperate star
Shall draw the thing as he sees it for the God of
things as they are."

For myself, I see that pointed bridge of brick and cobblestones less romantically than did M. Flandin, in the year of grace 1841. I even have to confess that I do not see the white peak of Elvend quite so acute or so aptly placed with respect to the bridge below it. But I do see that the river and its bridges are a notable feature of Hamadan, falling away between boulders and poplars into a winding cleft through the clay-coloured town. And I see what M. Flandin did not, what perhaps in 1841

THE BAZAAR

was not there to see, a quaint low mosque at one end of the bridge, with windows of heavy wooden lattice-work in which panes of white paper are pasted against the cold.

II



Not far beyond the bridge lies the Office. I, being used to reach offices by way of a lift, find this Office a highly characteristic place. The gateway giving entrance thereto is by no means so august as some others in Hamadan. Still, it is a handsome enough brick arch, leading into a dark vaulted vestibule. From the vestibule an inner door opens at right angles into a court which no one would ever have expected. It is laid out like a garden with trees, flower beds, and brick walks. And at the farther end of it lies the Office proper. This is a long, low, flat-roofed house, faced with light buff brick, whose most engaging feature is the *talar* in the centre.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

The *talar* is a great loggia, raised four or five feet above the ground but rising itself through the second story to the roof, the outer edge of which it helps to hold up by means of two tall and extremely slim pillars with slender carved capitals. The two inner corners of the *talar* are decorated at the top with pendentives of stalactites and painted flowers in pale yellow, while a good part of the rear wall is one immense window. The square lower part of the window is cut up into innumerable tiny panes, the upper part being an ogival lattice of weathered wood like those I saw in Kazvin. And on either side of the *talar* is one more such cusped lattice, not quite so large, their intricate dark brown wheels relieving the yellowish façade in the pleasantest possible way.

The Office itself is entered not through the *talar* but through a vestibule on either side of it, from which doors open both into the loggia and into the adjoining rooms. After such an approach, however, it is surprising to discover how like other offices is this one. The chief difference is in the black-capped *mirzas* who sit at many of the desks. A *mirza*, I might add, is either a prince or a scribe, according as the title follows or precedes his given name. These *mirzas* are not princes. They are, as a matter of fact, nearly all Jews, though they dress like Persians and speak French much better than I. But the true touch of the country is a woolly brown lamb which at the psychological moment a villager known to the Sah'b produces from the folds of an *aba* and presents to him for *pishkesh*: which means that the Sah'b is expected in return to gratify the donor with a gift of money rather more than equal to the value of the lamb.

Next the Office, all but, is the Bank. Theoretically,

THE BAZAAR

you know, banks do not exist in the Near East, since the taking of interest is forbidden by the Koran. Practically, however, there is no part of the world where such exorbitant rates of interest are extorted from the wretch who needs money. And there are two foreign institutions which have branches in all the chief Persian towns: the Imperial Bank of Persia, a British corporation, and the Russian Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de la Perse. For us, however, *the* Bank is the English one. Its gate is rather more imposing than that of the Office. As for the court inside the gate, it is smaller and paved with stone, albeit watered by the most unbanklike of little rivers, flowing symmetrically in shallow stone channels which you cross by miniature arched bridges. There is also a *talar*. And beyond the *talar* I find occasion to be confirmed anew in my idea that Hamadan is not a wasps' nest.

They tell me that the Persian is quick as a Westerner to learn those secrets of commercial paper which to a Turk, as to myself, are dark as the ways of Providence. The game of exchange is one that Persians pick up in no time, and the consequence is that the Hamadan branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia is rather more important, commercially, than its central office in Tehran. They also tell me amusing stories of the amenities which under the old régime used to be exchanged between this British institution and its Russian rival. The English, who were first in the field, describe the latter as a pawnshop, since it is not run like their own bank on a strictly commercial basis, being a dependency of the Russian Ministry of Finance. The Russians, on the other hand, do not look kindly upon the fact that the English have a monopoly

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of banknotes in Persia for 99 years—or until 1988. The trouble with these notes is that they are good only for the town where they are issued, being elsewhere subject to discount. Which is the reason why travellers in Persia are obliged to load themselves down with sacks of *krans*. But if any branch were at any time unable to redeem its notes, the Bank would forfeit its monopoly. So the Russians used to collect as many of the English notes as they could lay hands on, suddenly presenting them for payment at a moment when they had reason to believe that the branch they chose was short of cash. But they never quite caught the English out. And on one occasion the Hamadan branch redeemed so large a number of its own notes in so huge a quantity of the minutest coins of the realm that the Russians never repeated the experiment. New light on the workings of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907!

Quite as amusing, to my simple mind, is it to watch the people who come and go through the court. I am still too green to tell whether they be Persians or not, unless they show a certain type of lean, distinguished face. Portly Hebrews enter with bags of shekels such as we carried up-country. Natives of Baghdad, known by their tight silk robes and their drooping fezzes, bring in the news of the Tigris. Semi-European Armenians stick long noses between the bars of the cashier's cage. And one customer would make his fortune at a costume ball. His loose clothes are of so pale a blue that I can't imagine how he keeps them so immaculate. He wears top boots with a curious design cut into the upper edge of them. Around his waist is a bulging figured silk girdle, out of which protrude suggestive handles of ivory, silver, and

THE BAZAAR

steel damascened with gold. A replica of that girdle, on a reduced scale, binds about his forehead a black *kola*, taller and more pontifical than I have yet seen. What is more, he has features to go with these striking accoutrements—proud, aquiline, so spare that deep hollows underlie his cheek-bones, yet of an enviable swarthy ruddiness, with one broad, black, unbroken bar of eyebrow above two profound eyes that seem to meditate anything but finance.

“Who on earth is that magnificent creature?” I demand of the Sah’b.

“That? Oh, only a Kurd,” he replies. “Come on.”

III

The Bazaar proper lies a short distance down hill from the Bank and the Office, on the same side of the river. A *mirza* guides me there, walking in front of me to clear the way. He makes nothing of shoving people aside, and they, like Prussians on the same sidewalk with an officer, make nothing of being shoved. That is how the steps of greatness are smoothed in Persia. For the rest, no great smoothness is perceptible to my steps. What pleases me most about the streets is their narrowness, and the manner in which they swerve this way or that, and the gay chatter of which they are full. There is something Neapolitan about it, something at all events not Turkish. And what do I catch sight of through a gateway but a dome, the dome of the Masjid-i-Juma, the *mirza* tells me—which is to say the dome of the Friday mosque—and around the base of that dome a few turquoise tiles? After all——!

We turn into a small square, which is dark and damp

PERSIAN MINIATURES

by reason of the matting roofing it over, stretched on wooden beams. Here is a vegetable and meat market, whose stalls leave but a narrow aisle around the edges. Dried fruits, fresh apples, quinces, oranges, pile the stands. Bunches of big white grapes, looking none too fresh, hang from rafters. Beyond are butcher shops with live sheep and dead sheep in them, sheep with their fleeces and sheep without their fleeces, sheep in every stage of dismemberment, hanging from hooks or laid out on stained slabs of wood for the admiration of the public. Even at this late season flies not a few buzz around them, which no one would ever think of keeping away by means of any kind of screen. In one corner an old man squats in the mud with a quantity of goats' heads lying on the ground in front of him. Every now and then a customer picks one up by a horn, examines it attentively, and lays it back in the mud. Out of another stall comes another old man carrying a chicken. He wears a leather skull cap, and his beard is dyed scarlet with henna. He catches the squawking fowl by the wings, which he folds back and lays in the mud under his right foot. Under his left he sets the creature's legs; and then, very deliberately, in the manner prescribed by the canon, he cuts the chicken's throat, the blood spurting out over the muddy cobblestones.

We pass on into a crooked alley, lined on both sides by little shops. They are open in front, and some of them have counters flush with the street. Others have no counter at all. In all of them the proprietor sits on a rug amid his wares. Among wares that catch my eye are hanging metal pots which look like pewter, though they are probably tinned copper. The biggest and best ones

THE BAZAAR

have Arabic inscriptions on them in relief, together with other decorations of arabesques and flowers. I also notice shops that would contain enlightenment for the textile curator of a certain American museum, who once showed me a piece of homespun striped in soft colours, with the interesting information that the people of "the Orient" used it for portières and sofa pillows. I held my tongue: but in this alley are just such stuffs for saddle-cloths and saddlebags of the humbler sort, carried by mules and donkeys in pack trains. There are also white saddlebags elaborately embroidered in colours. And what would you say to a flour bag, a plain white canvas sack of the sort we throw away, decorated with blue flowers and I don't know what?

At last the alley narrows in front of us into a dark archway. Here is the heart of the Bazaar, a place of twilight roofed in from sun, rain, or snow. I have seen something like it in Stambul and other cities; but I have never happened to see horses, donkeys, mules, camels even, so much at home between shops and men. They jingle to and fro through the dusky maze, shoving pedestrians aside more unceremoniously than does the *mirza* in front of me. My confused picture of the Bazaar, however, only profits thereby. Rugs are what I see first, hanging on walls, spread out on counters, piled in corners. There are saddlebags, too, of the kind that belonged to the cavalier on the Russian road, and felts galore. These are a great specialty of Hamadan. One common use of them is under a saddle, which is likely to have more wood about it than is comfortable for the toughest hide. They are also popular to sit on or sleep on, or to carpet a humble floor. It is therefore an art to decorate them with sim-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

ple designs in dull red, blue, or green, with the happiest results for the eye.

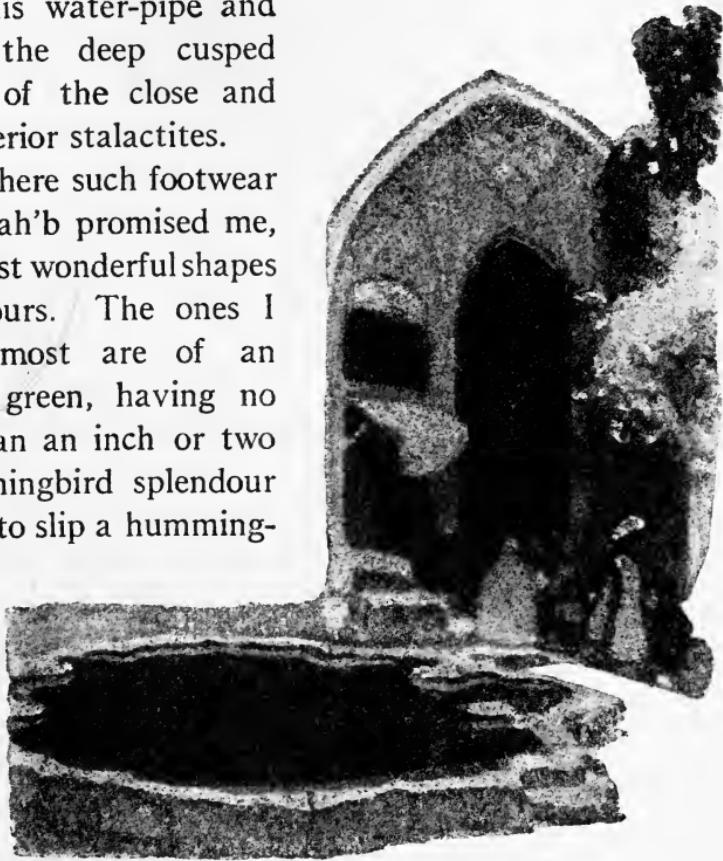
In general the various trades tend to stick together, though their boundaries are not very clear. Every now and then I come across a new department of cutlery, where are queer curved knives such as might be most at home in the girdle of my magnificent Kurd, marquetried with gold, perhaps, and having strangely watered blades. Then there is any number of jewellers' shops, with bowls of seed pearls, big filigree gold earrings, and bigger pendants, often crescent-shaped and engraved with fine lines or set with uneven stones. You see gold beads, too, and odds and ends of coins such as are always being dug up in the fields of the East, piled helter skelter with cartridges and all manner of European abominations.

No two streets of the Bazaar are of the same length or roofed quite alike. Here one dark corridor ends suddenly in a blaze of sun. There another reaches a long tentacle down hill, the dim perspective being cut at intervals by cross bars of light. I am treated, too, to sudden glimpses of courts, with camels in them, or a confusion of bales, or tall-capped people drinking tea in the sun. But long before I have seen all I want to the *mirza* leads me around to a part of the Bazaar handsomer than any other. This is where the leather merchants foregather. Leather, you must know, is another great specialty of Hamadan; and the leather men ply their trade not under rafters or matting but high brick domes. The way in which some obscure architect handled their groined vaulting is a thing to see, as are the pointed lunettes of dark wooden latticework which he set in the upper gloom of the octa-

THE BAZAAR

gons where two streets meet. And there a pointed arch is more than likely to open into a quadrangle with a pool in the centre, or a trellised brick platform where it must be very pleasant for a sojourner in a caravanserai to smoke his water-pipe and admire the deep cusped porches of the close and their interior stalactites.

I find here such footwear as the Sah'b promised me, of the most wonderful shapes and colours. The ones I admire most are of an emerald green, having no more than an inch or two of hummingbird splendour wherein to slip a humming-



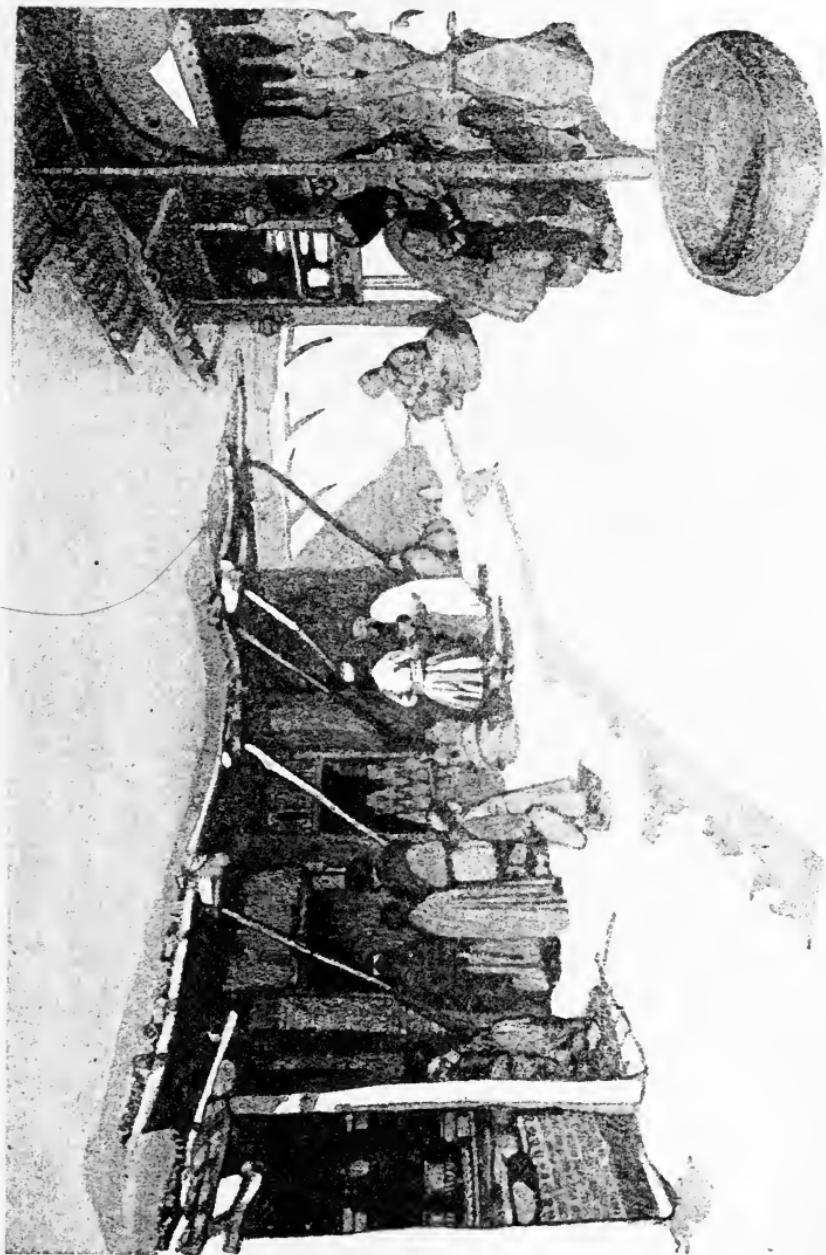
bird's toes. Mine, alas, are not of the gender worthy of such shoon. I also admire an instrument of brass, shaped like a hand, with which a workman beats a strip of vivid morocco. Other workmen, however, run American sewing machines as nonchalantly as if they had invented them. The saddlers and the harness makers are the natural allies of this gentry. Their

PERSIAN MINIATURES

craft is the more interesting to watch because of the deft things they do in the way of decorating. They inlay leather of one colour into leather of another colour, and devise out of polished metal and slivers of mirror glass quaint ornaments that are meant to glitter and jingle about a horse. Nor must I forget those leather cradles with a piece of wood set into each end for stiffening. No one dreams, of course, of leaving that wood as it comes to him. It can be carved with little arabesques, or covered, if you prefer, with a bit of brocade or old embroidery.

What the *mirza* saves for the last is a quarter of open streets where prosperous Russian and Armenian shops do their wickedest to introduce a false air of modernity into ancient Ecbatana. He points out to me with pride the glass show-windows, the bilious calicoes, the—can I believe my eyes?—cheap American shoes. Yet, quite accidentally, he shows me something after all. For on our way back to the Office we pass the crowded booths where the potters of Lalein display their wares. They are not forgers or sentimentalists, you understand, those potters of Lalein. They supply an honest, every-day demand for pipkins to cook in, for bowls of every imaginable size, having plain edges or fluted, for flowerpots whose two or three handles give them an inimitable finish, for jars to hold water—though they rarely do! Then there are all kinds of other jars, slim ones, pot-bellied ones, tall enough ones to hold a man, true Ali Baba jars, which are used for the storing of wheat and other provisions. The biggest jars are double-deckers, whose upper storey is conveniently provided like the flowerpots with handles. Most of this earthenware is yellower

POT SHOPS



PERSIAN MINIATURES

than we usually see, glazed or unglazed as the case may be. But a good deal of it is unevenly enamelled in peacock colour, turquoise colour, the blue-green of the domes of Kazvin.

And they tell me there is nothing to see in Hamadan!

VI

LEAF FROM THE BOOK OF SER MARCO POLO

At the straits leading into the Great Sea, on the west side, there is a hill called the Faro.—But since beginning on this matter I have changed my mind, because so many people know all about it; so we will not put it in our description, but go on to something else. And so I will tell you about the Tartars of the Ponent and the lords who have reigned over them.

Colonel Henry Yule: THE BOOK OF SER MARCO POLO

AS A MATTER of fact, there is something to see in Hamadan. I regret to confess, however, that I never saw it, or more than the outside of it—which was one of the things I glanced at the first day I visited the Bazaar. Yet, reader, I shall further confess that some time afterward, sitting in a window above New York harbour, I went to the pains to write out by hand and to copy on the typewriter a long chapter about that tall-domed mausoleum, whose squat porch and solid stone door open upon a species of lumberyard neighbourly to the potters of Lalein. To that end I turned, very diligently, the pages of Holy Writ and of the Apocrypha, not to mention those of secular volumes not a few. I then set about sugaring for you such pills as the history of Media, of Persia, of Assyria, of Judæa. I treated of the Babylonish Captivity and adventured so far afield as Lydia and Greece, bringing

PERSIAN MINIATURES

you back to the campaigns of Sir Archibald Murray and Sir Stanley Maude. I even made an excursion into the Higher Criticism, steering in a subtle manner between the sensibilities of the godly and of the profane. But the outcome of the Higher Criticism, reader, has been to cut that chapter out of your book. For when I began to turn over the tales of earlier travellers I found that every one of them had something to say about Esther and Mordecai, and their tomb in Hamadan. And most of those conscientious men had been into that tomb. Whereas I, who passed it so much oftener, never set foot there.

Why, do you suppose, was that? Certainly not because Hamadan, or Ecbatana, the summer capital of King Ahasuerus, seems to me too unlikely a place for Queen Esther to have died in, or because I find no interest in the origin of the Hebrew Feast of Purim, or because the tradition of the tomb is too recent. As early as the twelfth century, at any rate, the famous Jewish traveller Benjamin of Tudela saw our mausoleum. The personage around whom Kit Marlowe wrote his "Tragedy of Tamburlaine the Great" destroyed it two or three hundred years later. The Turk Khosrev Pasha, general of Sultan Murad IV, destroyed it again in 1630. And the historian Von Hammer says it then lay within the precincts of a mosque of a thousand and one columns; while the French father Sanson, who visited Hamadan about 1683, mentions our high dome as being a remnant of a magnificent temple, ornamented with tiles. The existing monument, however, seems to be the work of two pious Jews of Kashan, who restored it in 1713. But nothing about its present appearance is so picturesque as a piece of

LEAF FROM THE BOOK OF SER MARCO POLO

gossip I heard in Hamadan, to the effect that the comfortable fortune of a certain Hebrew doctor of the town was founded upon a jar of gold he accidentally unearthed in the tomb.

The fact is, I fear, that I judged the unseen interior of that whitened sepulchre by its rather gaunt exterior. I fear, too, that I am not of those who find it essential to read the Bible literally. Whether Queen Esther actually existed or not is to me less interesting than the circumstance that some one, a long time ago, made her the heroine of an uncommonly good story: not quite so short as modern editors like, but well enough put together to be true. But why, I wonder, did no Sunday School teacher of my youth ever think of telling me that King Ahasuerus was really Xerxes the Great? And that between his divorce from Queen Vashti and his marriage with Queen Esther he made an irrelevant journey which the author of the Book of Esther was far too perfect an artist to say anything about—to Thermopylæ and Salamis and Platæa?



VII

PERSIAN APPARATUS

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus. . . .

Quintus Horatius Flaccus: CARMINA

I

TO SUCH vague and illusory purposes does one go to school! One scans incomprehensible lines, one desperately thumbs the dog-eared lexicon of youth, and one promptly drops the whole affair into a sieve of a memory—in order to pick up, years later, out of some clogged corner of that same sieve, a title to one's hand! It came to me, with an amused grin, when I beheld that new house for which we had foregone the unseen enchantments of Resht and had fallen into conflict with the paramount Power in north Persia. But if I steal the phrase it is not because I agree with the poet. The poet I agree with is our own, who says something—does he not?—about doing in Persia as the Persians do. At any rate, I share with pacifists, optimists, and other dangerous classes of citizens a disposition to be too easily pleased by things as I find them. And I can never too positively declare that I passed in that house one of the most agreeable winters of a misspent life. Yet I could not help thinking, the first time my eye fell upon it, that Horace had something in common

PERSIAN APPARATUS

with my Belgian lady, and that the poet of white Roman villas might have sung a different song if he had had a little actual experience of Persian pomp.

These reflections were inspired by the simple but perfectly obvious fact that the mansion toward which we had been hastening day and night, as fast as asps could carry us, was made of nothing more splendid than—mud. Adobe is perhaps the more graceful name. And, unlike the beaver, you pour it into little rectangular moulds which you afterward set out to dry in the never-failing Persian sun. You may even, if so you be minded, bake some of it in quicker furnaces and produce yellowish bricks for the enrichment of a gateway or a façade. But elemental earth and water are the foundation of all Persian architecture. The Persian architect therefore need waste no time in hesitating between timber, brick, stone, hollow tile, reinforced concrete, and what not. He has only one possible building material; and the lot on which he builds, however humble, contains as much of it as he needs. The very roofs are of mud, spread thick on camel-thorn and poplar trunks.

Our roof, nevertheless, was not that kind of roof, being a low-pitched, broad-eaved timber one, overlaid by some kind of tar paper imported from that *ville lumière* of this quarter of Asia, Baku. And that was only one reason why our house was a worthy goal of so rapid a journey, and an object of so great curiosity to the good people of Hamadan. For it also had Craftsman windows wider than they were long, provided with admirable window seats in the four-foot wall, to say nothing of an arcaded veranda more reminiscent of a Spanish *patio* than of a Persian *talar*. Most contrary of all, however, to the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

laws of the Medes and the Persians, it contained the unheard-of rarity of wooden floors—upon which, we lived to learn, rugs had a fantastic habit of billowing in a gale.

We lived to learn several other unexpected things before we got through with it. For a new house has idiosyncrasies as distinct as a new ship or a new baby—and most so when it departs from accepted traditions. As for a new mud house, it is rather more habitable above ground, I fancy, than below. Still, our struggles with the primitive problems of life brought us nearer in spirit to the inhabitants of trenches than to dwellers in onyx-halled apartment houses, who take no thought how they shall wash their hands or read their evening paper, or wherewithal shall they be warmed. But we belonged to a race that is *par excellence* the picknicker and camper-out of the earth, and between us we could scrape up humour enough to be amused at our experience of Persian pomp. With gas or electricity, of course, we had nothing to do. For light we depended on the “blacke oyle, stynkeng horrabylye,” of Baku, eked out by Russian candles. Of our various stratagems to keep warm, an oil stove in the end proved most effective. In most of the rooms, however, we had fireplaces, wherein we burned those piteous faggots which in Persia pass for wood. We likewise made a good start at burning the dining-room floor, thanks to a builder who had never before set a fireplace on anything but a mud underpinning and had taken too few precautions. I cannot resist adding that this gentleman, an Armenian carpenter, was the “intelligent Persian” whose topographical information Prof. Williams Jackson takes pains to quote. We were further able to boast nothing less recondite than a furnace, the invention

PERSIAN APPARATUS

and the pride of the heart of the master of the house, who devised it out of the mud of his cellar and who caused mud tunnels to conduct its affluvia into three or four rooms. For the nourishment of this furnace we originally proposed to use the commonest fuel of Persia, *tapeh*. That, if you insist on knowing, is dried camel dung. And among the many and vivid smells of that treeless land I shall always remember the odour of burning *tapeh*. We found it a little too penetrating, even when so far removed from sight. We also found the problem of the conservation of energy more insoluble than ever, when we tried to make some sort of equation between the unappeasable appetite of the furnace for poplar wood and the infinitesimal amount of heat that rose from the registers—which were merely round holes in the floor. We therefore closed them and the incident, lest we step into them and break our necks.

Water, in Hamadan, is a commodity even more precious than heat or light. You very soon learn to be thankful if you can get enough to make a cup of tea, forgetting such excesses of luxury as hot and cold taps. We tremblingly dug a well in our cellar—and, thank God, a little water oozed into the bottom of that well. What is more, we were able to obtain from Baku a small hand pump, which was generally in good enough order to send a hopeful drip into the kitchen. Thence to distribute it throughout the house was a matter of fetching and carrying. Under the circumstances it was too much to dream of maintaining more than one bathroom. But, my brethren, what a bathroom! It possessed, for one thing, my favourite view, looking out of two big windows across the flat roofs and sharp poplar tops of the town to that concave

PERSIAN MINIATURES

plain of such inimitable chameleon changes of colour. It further possessed a monstrous copper samovar, contrived by the ingenuity of the Sah'b, into two mouths of which uncomplaining underlings fed countless gallons of water and numberless bundles of faggots. But the glory of the room was the bathtub. The foundation of this structure was, of course, mud. The mud was faced, however, like the broad sills of the windows, with the square, blue-green tiles of Lalein. Have I said that Lalein is a village in the region of Hamadan where the lost art of glazing earthenware is still humbly practised? Never have I bathed in anything quite so pretty as that tank of turquoise water. The cement that held the tiles together, though, was home-made, lacking anything better from Baku; and, alas, it was not a success. Not only had it to be washed off after one had taken one's bath, but the ceiling of the room below was observed to darken, to drip, and most threateningly to sag. And this in spite of the fact that the water from the bathtub was supposed to run away into the garden! We therefore had to give up, with bitter lamentations, our peacock tiles, substituting such receptacles of metal or rubber as could be improvised out of the resources of the country.

II

I may airily seem to imply that I had a personal hand in these various arrangements. As a matter of fact I arrived on the scene too late to admire the invention of most of them. What I was happy enough not to miss was the moving in. I fear the Sah'b and the Khanum were less happy in entertaining a guest-friend who had known them too long to feel any scruple in combating

PERSIAN APPARATUS

their views and exposing his own with regard to the furnishing of their rooms. It was perhaps fortunate that we were a family of three, and therefore sometimes able to secure a casting vote. As often as not, however, we maintained three perfectly irreconcilable opinions. Nevertheless no open rupture or secret coolness resulted from our lively arguments on interior decoration. And I, for one, found it highly amusing to open and to dispose of the contents of the cases which strange-looking ruffians brought to the house on their backs.

Our two rooms of state, to the vast scandal of Hamadan, literally had mud walls, ungarnished with plaster, sizing, or colour of any kind, but smoothed past all resemblance to their parental earth. For ourselves, we desired no better background for Persian plates, for Persian miniatures, for Persian mirror frames, for brasses, embroideries, rugs, and other Oriental objects of art which my wise host and hostess spent much of their leisure in collecting. A good many of these objects had made no great journey. But others, intended more strictly for use, had performed such an *Odyssey* that it was a wonder we had a dish to eat out of or a chair to sit in. The sojourner in Persia is not like his happy cousin of Italy, able to go forth wherever he finds himself and pick up delectable furniture. For the people of the East use almost no furniture. They require merely a few rugs or mats to sit and sleep on and a few plates and bowls for their cookery. So the stranger who dwells among them has to transport from oversea everything he needs for his own more complicated housekeeping. In a place like Hamadan, accordingly, you must first get your goods to Enzeli or to Baghdad, whence they are transported 250 or 315 miles by caravan. And

PERSIAN MINIATURES

if you have seen the springless gharries that climb the passes of the Russian road, or if you have noticed how mules and camels drop their packs when they make camp, you will not wonder that a neighbour of ours had the unhappiness to lose an entire dinner set she had imported. We were delighted to find that only about half of our own china was smashed.

For breakage and theft we were prepared, not to say moth and rust. What gave us something of a shock was to discover that mice had been at our books—as precious in Persia as chairs or soup plates. Since the books were not mine, I found it in me to smile upon noting that Bourget's "Sensations d'Italie" had been devoured from cover to cover. O subtle mice of Ecbatana! For the French in general they exhibited a remarkable taste. They had also found nourishment in Jane Austen, Joseph Conrad, and Henry James. It surprised me more to find traces of those hungry Persian rodents in certain Latin authors, among them the poet of my text, who had somehow found their way into that Parthian *galère*. Hakluyt, too, had whiled away some of their hours—happily in the not irreplaceable Everyman edition. They had passed by our rug books, however, together with our books on Persia and such works as we possessed of the American Red Blood school. I cannot explain this unaccountable vagary. I merely state.

Our library was on those days when a terrific winter wind howled out of the gorges of Elvend the one comfortable room in the house, being smaller than the others and having only one big window. This was also the room that had least in it to remind us where we were, with its rows of Latin-lettered books, its wicker chairs, its tinted

PERSIAN APPARATUS

walls, and its pictures of other lands. Two of the latter were for me an unquenchable wellspring of whimsical philosophy. For who should gaze inscrutably at each other from either side of the door, reminding me of Paul Bourget and the Persian mice, but that adorable minx Lucrezia Crivelli, with her jewelled fillet bound about her brow, and the romantic Knight of Malta! I must add in passing that I cannot believe him really to have been a Knight of Malta, because I do not believe there were any Knights of Malta when Giorgione painted him—if Giorgione did paint him. There were only Knights of Rhodes. But if you object to that point of quibbling, you might at least call him a Knight of St. John. However, there he hung in remote Ecbatana, looking no more surprised than his lovely companion to find himself so far away from Florence, and filling me with obstinate questions about western taste and the vicissitudes of western wandering. Did Lucrezia and the nameless Knight, I wonder, ever in life find themselves so close together? And what would they have thought had it been told them that their portraits, multiplied by a trick they did not know, should in centuries to come adorn the house of an Englishman in Persia, who had to wife the daughter of a world unknown, or barely discovered, in their day?

When we sat in that room at tea time, with a wood fire crackling behind a pair of English andirons, it always seemed to me extraordinarily characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, in which familiarity with the sea has so long bred familiarity with lands beyond the sea, but which so stoutly takes with it wherever it goes its own language and customs. One of us was a true son of St. George,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

though accidentally born outside the fold of his race. Two of us were descended from those contemporaries of Sir Robert Sherley who three hundred years ago sailed out of Old England to found a New England. Yet there we sat in Persia, the three of us, owning none but English blood, speaking—whatever Cockney or Cantabrian might think about it!—no tongue but English, and knowing very little more about the land in which we sat than you who read these words. It was a symbol, that cosy little library, of the unconquerable vitality of a race, of the pride of a man in his own house and his own acre, which has brought forth such miracles as Athens and Venice and Oxford, which flowered once into the painting of the Renaissance, the literature of Elisabeth. But a better symbol was the bare slope of poplars outside the window, still Persia after three thousand years of conquest, glory, and disaster. After all, I sometimes used to wonder, what business had we there? And how about this modern fashion of borrowing our neighbour's art? If the Florentines and Venetians had followed it as persistently as we, had contented themselves with collecting pseudo-Greek marbles and Byzantine mosaics, there would have been no ghost of a Lucrezia Crivelli to smile across a Persian doorway at the shadow of a Knight of—St. John! Where shall we end with all this transporting of one country to another? Are we going to wipe out boundaries and become cosmopolites all?

There was no time to answer these long questions before our destinies drew us, one after the other, out of that little room. And when next we met it was seven thousand miles away, when the world was already deep in the greatest of wars. Looking at it from a high

PERSIAN APPARATUS

window above New York harbour, I have sometimes seen it as the beginning of an answer to those questions of our Persian library. That formidable outburst against the ambitions a-prowl in the earth, does it not touch too the dream of the *Internationale*, and isolate anew the man without a country? For the pride of a man in his own house and his own acre is rooted very deeply—nor need it imperil another man's peace. The most permanent agreement of men is to differ. The thing is to recognise and to respect each other's differences. If one happy result of so much unhappiness should be to let the sun shine again on overshadowed lands, another might be to check the standardising of mankind. And if emigrations, concession huntings, even gentleman adventurings fall for a time out of fashion, what matter? There is still adventuring to do in a country which has not yet achieved a Lucrezia Crivelli of its own!

III

The most characteristic piece of Persian apparatus in our house, and the worthiest to be considered in the Horatian sense, was to be seen below stairs—if you will not take that technical phrase too literally. The Sah'b used to complain that he never knew how many servants we had, one of his favourite diversions being to ask the Khanum how many more she had taken on. Persia follows the rest of Asia in this regard; though as a matter of fact we were not so dreadfully attended as most of our neighbours. Oriental servants work for longer hours, with fewer outings, than occidental ones, but each one does much less. The only one of ours who made us feel that he earned every *shabi* of his somewhat sketchy

PERSIAN MINIATURES

stipend was a laborious, quick-witted, and picturesque godson of the great Shah Abbas, a youngster whose voice just began to crack. None of them, for that matter, were far out of infancy. And it surprised me to see how fast they picked up our ways, many of which to them must have seemed inexplicable and capricious beyond reason.

I often wished I knew what their comments were. We sometimes caught rumours, however, through confidences made to the masters of other servants. When we went out to dinner our cook, our butler, or both, would occasionally go, too, to help in the kitchen or the dining room. In fact, it is not good form for a person of such consequence as a *Firengi* to leave his door at all without a servant or two at his heels; though I fear we rather scandalised Hamadan by our backwardness in conforming to this custom. A *Firengi*, I should explain in parenthesis, is a Frank. Strange, is it not? and subtly complimentary to a great race, how since the time of the crusades that name has stuck in western Asia as descriptive of all Europeans—even Germans!—and their cousins beyond the seas. The servants of the *Firengis* in Hamadan formed a sort of society apart, and you may be sure that among them no news was allowed to escape. Thus it came to our ears that the Sah'b was known to an inner few as the Chief of the Desert—because our house stood by itself outside the town! And I was enchanted to learn that I, having come to Persia without wives, children, valets, employments, or other visible human ties, had been decorated with the picturesque title of Prince All Alone.

You of the effete West are lapped in the soft ministrations of the Eternal Feminine. To us of sterner Ecbatana is permitted no such Sybarism. I may note, how-

PERSIAN APPARATUS

ever, the exceptional case of *Firengis* with young children. A lady of the land may then risk her reputation by entering the presence of corrupt Christian men. She does so bare-footed, in figured red trousers of a fulness, loosely swathed in a length of white or printed cotton, covering her head and held for decency's sake in front of her mouth. Custom, of course, will make her less meticulous; but when a stranger is present and her duties require the use of both her hands, it is astonishing how ingenious she is in holding her veil in her teeth and in keeping her back on the quarter of peril.

There is another exceptional case to be noted of a country where laundresses are more than likely to have smallpox in their houses. These ladies answered to the most æsthetic names: Deer, Sugar, Angel, Peacock, Parrot. To us, however, they were generically known as Sister. They always carried on their operations in big blue-glazed bowls, preferably set on the ground near the clothes line, beside which they would squat on their heels. I remember one of them who sent us one week a substitute. Inquiring into the matter the Khanum was told "Sister makes a petition: she will have a child. But she will come next week." And Sister did! The milking of a cow is one more exceptional case, since such duties



PERSIAN MINIATURES

are too ignoble for man. Here again a blue-glazed bowl comes into use, being held between the knees of the operator. I might add that for the complete success of the operation it is considered necessary for the calf to be tied in sight of the cow. Otherwise the sacred fount infallibly goes dry. We had the greatest trouble to induce our personnel even to try the experiment of milking when no calf was in sight. This, I suppose, is why the Persians are so unwilling to sell or to kill a calf, and why they are so tender of the little creatures. The first time the stork visited our stable a small animal wrapped up against the cold in green felt was brought blinking into the dining room for us to admire. And we learned that the calf spent its first few nights with the servants, in their quarters.

These, I hasten to add, were not in the house. While there are, especially in Persia, very solid advantages in having servants out of the house at night, there are also disadvantages—as will appear most plainly on a winter morning after a party. We then had the choice of walking a long way through the snow to bang on the stable door, or of waiting for breakfast. Their own breakfast, and all their other meals, the servants were supposed to provide for themselves: primarily because a *Firengi* is an impure being, whose food and dishes are defilement to those of the faith; secondarily, because a *Firengi* eats meats too strange for the palate of a Persian. We had reason to believe, however, that at least in our house the Persians were not too fastidious about our menu or our purity! They had quarters at one end of the stable, with a fireplace to keep them warm and a more efficacious invention of their own which they called a *kursi*. A *kursi* is

PERSIAN APPARATUS

the counterpart of a Turkish *tandur*, being a fixed or portable brasier covered by a wooden frame, over which a quilt or a big rug is spread; and under that asphyxiating rug or quilt a considerable household can spend the day or the night, tucking themselves up to the waist or the neck as the case may be. The boys never could understand why we didn't have *kursis*, too. The rest of their furniture consisted of rugs, wherewith to cover the mud floor. That is why there are so many rugs in Persia—the mud floors. And there is another good reason why so many of them are a little more or a little less than six feet long. For a *do-zar*, a two-yard, is all your Persian needs in the way of a bed; and if you have such a rug that is not brand new, you may be sure that some very picturesque-looking customer has dreamed upon it the dreams of Asia. I fear that the dreams of our dependents were sometimes interrupted. For the roof over their heads was a mud one, and being new it was leaky. After a rain or a thaw, therefore, we would hire the youth of the neighbourhood to play tag on it, in order to pack the mud the harder with their bare feet!

What to my alien eye was most striking about our retainers was their dress. To be served at dinner by a butler in bare or stockinginged feet, according to the season, bearing upon his head a pontifical mitre of brown or black felt, not unlike the tall brimless hat of Greek monks and Russian priests, was an experience which I did not live long enough in Persia to take as a matter of course. It always gave me the sense of assisting at a rite celebrated by the flamen of an unknown creed. It made no difference that I myself was perfectly capable of balancing upon my brow an even more fantastic erection, eaved like a house, shinier

PERSIAN MINIATURES

than satin, and garnished with a coquettish ribbon. What caught my eye was the extraordinary fact that any human being could cherish a headdress different from my own, and account himself disgraced ever to be seen without it. Tall hats, however, were not all that distinguished our serving men. Between their *kola* and their unshod feet flapped a trouser not so full as that of the country Turk but giving no hint of the leg it contained, and a succession of tailed or kilted coats. The Persians think that *Firengi* men dress as indecently as *Firengi* women, in permitting our clothes to follow so closely the lines of our bodies. The fit of their own coats stops at the waist. From there hangs to the knee, or below, a pleated skirt which even a travelled Persian unwillingly exchanges for a Prince Albert, while a morning or evening coat is to him a thing of shame. Under his outer garment, with which he usually dispenses indoors, he wears a shorter and thinner one, less amply kilted, the tight sleeves of which are slit to the elbow, and dangle decoratively if inconveniently enough, when not buttoned up or turned back. This tunic is also more gaily hued. And the open throat of it sometimes reveals successive layers of inner integuments, of contrasting colours.

The brightest virtue of Habib, our butler, was that he possessed a beautiful emerald undercoat in which, when there was no company, he was sometimes good enough to pass, and eke to break, our plates. He was the official head of our establishment, being technically known as the Chief of the Service. He would always receive an order with the words "On my eye!" and when he knew not how to answer us he would say: "What petition shall I make?" He was a youth of twenty or thereabouts,

PERSIAN APPARATUS

espoused to a young person of twelve or thirteen who stayed with his mother. The society of neither of these ladies seemed to interest him too intensely. He preferred to live in the stable with the other boys and the calf. He also loved to harden the mouth of the Sah'b's horse. And when the time came to work in the garden was he most in his element. We finally had to hide from him a pruning knife we had obtained from Baku, so vastly did he prefer that toy to a dishrag or a duster. I can't say that I blamed him. He was much slower and stupider than is common of his quick-witted race; but it took a great deal to ruffle his temper, and the later we kept him up at night the better pleased he apparently was. He it was who, during a period of interregnum of which I shall have more to say, spread the table for the Sah'b's first bachelor dinner party with one of the Khanum's sheets—and not one of the best. Later in the evening, when supplementary refreshments were served, I observed that Habib had covered a tray with one of the discarded napkins of the dinner table. It was not really dirty, he afterward explained, and it seemed a pity to risk spoiling a new lace doily! I discovered, though, that he was an excellent hand at decorating a table. Without any orders he once picked to pieces a lot of hyacinths and traced with the single flowers so pretty a pattern on the tablecloth that I hadn't the heart to affront him by disapproving of it,



PERSIAN MINIATURES

though it was a little more finicky than I would have chosen for bachelors' hall. So did the genius of his race for design come out even in his humble fingers. On the whole, I learned more from him than he did from me—as when he would greet us in the morning with "Peace be with you," or politely take the Khanum's keys in both hands, or use instead of the first personal pronoun the phrase "your slave," or ceremoniously call one aside in consultation, saying "Without trouble, bring your honour here," or on state occasions serve tea on his knees. And he gave one strange glimpses of the world he lived in by speaking darkly of jinn, in connection with a friend's illness, and by telling us, when a lost watch was found in the house, that he had burned candles for its recovery.

The true head of the service was Mahmad Ali, the cook—or Mehm'd Ali as the others called him. Mehm'd Ali had been brought up as a butler himself, and an excellent one he was, though afflicted with a slight disfigurement of the mouth and a stammering of the tongue. But a domestic crisis had driven him into the kitchen, where he quickly learned to make pancakes and cakes much more complicated as well as he did sauces and curries for pilau—which really sounds more like *pileu*, if you will pronounce it in the Italian way. Consequently there were times when we were moved to call Mehm'd Ali out of his kitchen and say to him, with due ceremony: "Mehm'd Ali, may your hand feel no pain." Your white-capped *chef* or darkey Dinah might not know how to take so cryptic a pronunciation. But the mitred Mehm'd Ali knew it for the highest possible compliment. And being no more than nineteen, though already old enough to have been married and divorced, he would hide his blushes in a low bow, stam-

PERSIAN APPARATUS

mering in reply: "May honey be to your soul." The desire of Mehm'd Ali's heart was to possess a wrist watch. And he served us with a credit that only seldom lapsed for the sum of six *tomans* a month—which is a little less than six dollars.

I am bound to add that Mehm'd Ali would have been less clever than he was if he had not made out of us considerably more than that. For, being cook, he did the marketing. I was astounded to find telephones in Hamadan, a convenience at that time strange to imperial Constantinople. But very few Hamadanis had one. We did not, for instance. Neither did any butcher, baker, or candlestick-maker with whom we dealt. So there was no sitting comfortably at home and ordering what we wanted from the Bazaar. Nor did people from the Bazaar peddle their wares about the streets to any such degree as do the people of the Mediterranean. There is no such thing, either, as a delivery cart in Hamadan. The thing to do was to go to the Bazaar in person every morning after breakfast, and Mehm'd Ali was the person to do that thing—Mehm'd Ali and his *shagerd*, or apprentice. This was the youngest member of our juvenile establishment, a round-faced, bright-eyed, russet-coloured ragamuffin who toted Mehm'd Ali's flexible market basket, peeled Mehm'd Ali's potatoes, scoured Mehm'd Ali's earthenware pots, and ate Mehm'd Ali's bread. Which is to say that Mehm'd Ali engaged and theoretically maintained him, though I suspect that his face would have been neither so round nor so rosy had it not been for the crumbs from our table.

Going to the Bazaar was evidently the great affair of the day. It was amazing how long it took Mehm'd

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Ali to bargain for the toasted wafers of bread or the scarcely thicker flaps of *sangak* which filled in the chinks between Mehm'd Ali's own white loaves, for the eternal mutton of the country, for the frequent hare and partridge, or francolin, for the white *mast* which is the Persian version of Dr. Mechnikov's Elixir of Youth, for the famous melons of Isfahan that tasted to us like a flatter kind of squash, for the dubious bunches of grapes that looked fit only for the scavenger but that had merely begun to turn into raisins and really were very good. Beef was far rarer than game, vegetables were neither varied nor good unless they came out of our own garden, while such rarities as fish or strawberries were precious as pounded pearls and nightingales' tongues. Certain minute fish, to be sure, were indigenous to our neighbourhood; but as the Persians catch them by the simple expedient of poisoning the water, and sometimes die afterward, we thought twice before indulging in them. Once in a while a runner would bring to some member of our colony, from a river near Kerman-shah or from the faraway Caspian, a real fish, which at once became the foundation of a state dinner party.

Mehm'd Ali was so happy as to possess in addition to his other attainments, the art of letters. He accordingly kept strict toll of his purchases, rendering an account of them every day to the Khanum. There came, however, a day of despair when the Khanum temporarily shook off from her feet the dust of Hamadan, leaving the hapless Chief of the Desert and the Prince All Alone to shift for themselves. The Chief of the Desert, being a man of affairs, therefore handed over the housekeeping to the very incompetent hands of the Prince All Alone. The beauty of this arrangement was that the Prince All

PERSIAN APPARATUS

Alone knew scarcely a word of Persian—despite Habib's flattering comment that his progress in it was so rapid as to crack the air! Nevertheless, I gravely pretended to take Mehm'd Ali's accounts. And when I couldn't get it through my thick *Firengi* head what Mehm'd Ali was driving at, Mehm'd Ali would draw little pictures in my account book to illustrate his expenditures. Even then I sometimes hesitated between an egg and a turnip, or a hen and a partridge.

It was that latter fowl of calamity which at last ruffled our relations. The Sah'b one day brought home some partridges. It so happened that Mehm'd Ali also bought partridges that day; and lo the price of them was twice that of the Sah'b's partridges. My vocabulary being too limited to do justice to the occasion, the Sah'b took Mehm'd Ali over. I don't know whether he called upon the washers of the dead to carry Mehm'd Ali out, but he named Mehm'd Ali the son of a burnt father, and he cast in Mehm'd Ali's teeth that last of all insults: "Mehm'd Ali, you have no zeal!" He also docked Mehm'd Ali a *toman* of his pay. The which Mehm'd Ali took very much to heart. No cook in Hamadan, he stammered in wrath, bought more cheaply than he.

It chanced that there was to be football that afternoon —behold again the Anglo-Saxon in foreign parts—and after football the neighbouring *Firengis* were to come to us for tea. Cakes, therefore, were to be made, loaves baked, samovars lighted, china and silver set forth. When I hurried home at the end of the game to receive the hungry host, not a cake did I find, not a loaf, not even a single servant. Your Anglo-Saxon, however, is not so easily stumped. The *Firengis* had their tea, if a little

PERSIAN MINIATURES

late and not quite so plenteous as we had planned. But the subtle Mehm'd Ali, although he had not blackened our faces to the degree he hoped, after all made his point. He knew, and we knew, and each of us knew the other knew, that another cook capable of making both pilau and pancakes was not to be picked up in Hamadan—outside of some one else's kitchen. For the sake of the greater good, therefore, we that day learned the lesson of not insisting upon a lesser. And the next day Mehm'd Ali treated us to quite the most magnificent chocolate cake in his repertory. When we looked at it our mouths watered. When we tasted it we sent for Mehm'd Ali.

"Mehm'd Ali," said the Sah'b in all gravity, "may your hand feel no pain."

"Sah'b," replied Mehm'd Ali, "may honey be to your soul."

And do you know? Partridges grew a little cheaper—after that!

VIII

JIMMY & CO.

His star is a strange one ! one that leadeth him to fortune by the path of frowns ! to greatness by the aid of thwackings ! Truly the ways of Allah are wonderful !

George Meredith: THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT

LADIES and gentlemen, I have the honour to present to you Mr. James—not Henry. Jimmy, the ladies and the gentlemen—if any have succeeded in wading so far into our long-winded book.

This introduction is necessary to sketch our household in its true colours, not only because our dog is so important a member of our family, but because he is so admirable a proof of the saving inconsistency of human nature. For if there be a creature which a Persian is more unwilling to touch than a pig or a Christian, that creature is a dog. An orthodox Persian, especially if he be elderly and turbaned, will do anything to avoid shaking hands with us or drinking our impure tea. But if Jimmy chances to touch so much as the hem of his garment, the only remedy is to go straight to the bath, take off his turban, and jump into the “treasury.” And about the water of that treasury I have already told you, or insinuated to you, something. Yet mark the subtleties of orthodoxy when I also tell you that Jimmy, in

PERSIAN MINIATURES

spite of the double disadvantage under which he suffers by being in all literalness a Christian dog, finds favour in many an Iranian eye. Although in the prime of life he falsely passes, by reason of his diminutive stature, the curliness of his hair, and the affability of his manners, for a *tuleh*, a puppy. Now a puppy is justly exempted in Persia from the full-grown depravity of a *sag*, or dog. So our house-boys pet Jimmy outrageously. And whenever he goes out with us I notice that he is far more likely to draw admiring than disgusted glances, however indiscreetly he may sniff about the feet of the faithful.

Discretion, I fear, was never Jimmy's strong point. Where he was born I do not know, but his character is all of the quixotic island from which Irish terriers spring. He is a handsome little gentleman—I used the word advisedly—with a white coat which he finds none too easy to keep unspotted from the world, with a black patch on one quizzically uplifted ear, with a humorous eye. It twinkles, does that eye, like every eye of Erin, like the eyes of all who are irresistible to the softer sex and who most savour the relish of adventure. Jimmy is the best of companions, lively, affectionate, sympathetic, always ready for the unexpected, enduring misadventure without a whimper. He is not deficient, either, in the more homespun qualities of gratitude and respect for authority. But, devoted as he is to us, he finds our house too small and our garden too narrow a field for his inquiring and democratic spirit. We are domestic and sedentary while he is debonair, irresponsible, a bit of a boulevardier. To be out o' nights is what he adores. While I will not liken him to the ill knight in Malory, who went about distressing and destroying all ladies, I fear Jimmy is not

JIMMY & CO.

above forming unhallowed ties. And in the pursuit of them he has a way of disappearing for hours, for days. What is most affecting, however, is to see the prodigal come home from these absences with the darkness of disillusion in that normally twinkling eye, very much chastened in spirit, knowing perfectly well what reproaches will be heaped upon him, yet taking our hard words, perchance our heartless chastisements, with a comprehending and heroic resignation.

One of these mysterious disappearances lasted so long that we suspected abduction. And the more so as two days after Jimmy's departure the servants tried to console us by producing a greyhound somebody wanted to sell. Wherein is exemplified anew the Persian inconsistency with regard to dogs. A *tazi*, a greyhound, occupies the same privileged position as a puppy. Nothing is commoner than for a country gentleman to maintain a kennel of greyhounds, that he may course hare and gazelle withal. This particular greyhound, like most of the others I saw in Persia, was as a matter of fact a brown-hound. He had long, silky brown hair, with a slight crimp in it like a Russian wolfhound, and absurdly flapping ears. The Sah'b, to the immense disapproval of the house-boys, sardonically named him Ferda, which means To-morrow. For that word of hope occupies as large a place in the Persian vocabulary as it does in the Spanish. As for me, the droop of the newcomer's ears, the colour of his locks, and his hysterical manner, reminded me so strongly of a well-known portrait of the authoress of "Aurora Leigh" at the time of her marriage, that I could only call him Mrs. Browning. In short, we all looked coldly upon him, being too faithful to the lost dog of our

PERSIAN MINIATURES

hearts. Moreover, Mrs. Browning's excessive sensibility disgusted us. He regarded the most indifferent gesture as a personal menace, and was forever cringing and yelping. His one virtue was that he could run. How he could run, though! We coursed with him once or twice, and that crimped bundle of nerves actually caught us the makings of a jugged hare. But when Mrs. Browning finally made use of his unique gift to run away, all we regretted about him was the *toman* or two we had paid for so poor a creature.

Jimmy, in the meantime, failed to come back. So Habib made one day a second attempt at consolation by proudly bringing in a bird which he named a hawk. Falconry is by no means a lost art in this part of the world, where hunting Khans keep their hawks and their falconers quite like any baron of the thirteenth century. But this hawk, while he consumed chunks of raw meat with the utmost greediness, happened to be an owl, with two immense yellow eyes that blinked blindly at us as he stumbled about the brick floor of the veranda! And to the infinite disappointment of Habib we refused to add him to our already large enough list of pensioners.

Among these was an obscurer member whom I have not yet mentioned, belonging to the pariah caste of *sag*. Where he came from nobody knew. Nor did we take very kindly to him at first, the more so as the meat bill took a turn for the worse about that time. But as often as we ordered him away he infallibly turned up again, generally in the vicinity of the stable. Incidentally the boys kept hinting that dwellers in the desert required some sort of watchman. Many a dark word threw they out as well about wolves that ravened down from the

JIMMY & CO.

mountains on winter nights, plainly giving us to understand that nobody could keep the wolf from the door, or protect our slumbers, to say nothing of their own, better than this humble citizen of the country. So what did it avail us to kick against the pricks? We gave in, without admitted surrender or triumph on either side, and before we knew it the *sag* was on terms of familiarity with us all. He received, of course, none of Jimmy's honours. He never came into the house, being nothing but a plain yaller dog, rather bigger and redder than the ordinary, with a pair of clipped ears that gave him a vague distinction. But I noticed that Mehm'd Ali's rosy-cheeked apprentice was not too far gone in the canons of the orthodox to take the interloper into his arms or even to treat him to surreptitious kisses.

At last it began to be whispered that the powers of the air were against us, for the new watch-dog proceeded to develop a mysterious malady. He would twitch spasmodically at inopportune moments, and most dolorously would he howl in season and out. These symptoms, Habib explained, were due to the fact that an enemy, probably a thief who had set apart our house for some midnight foray, had fed the unfortunate creature with a piece of bread or a lump of meat containing an insidious needle. The needle, of course, had stuck in the dog's throat, and was the cause of his woe. Whether the needle was finally fatal to him, or whether, as the servants vowed, the implacable robber shot him, we never knew. At any rate, he, too, disappeared, and another reigned in his stead. This was a terrifying animal, bigger and yellower, without the distinguished ears, who at once made himself so much at home that he at first resisted all our attempts to get into or out

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of the garden. We stuck to the point, however, and he ended by grudgingly recognising our rights.

But Jimmy still stayed away—as we felt convinced, in a state of captivity. Yet when two or three months had gone by we gave him up as gone for good. Then one of the house-boys confided to us—we suspected because his tenure of office had become a little insecure—that his mother, while paying a call, had seen in the garden of her hostess a white puppy. Obscure as this clew was, we could not but follow it up. And it led to a deed of high-handedness which enlightened me not a little on some of the ways of Persia. For before we knew it we were told that the son of the lady in whose garden a white puppy had been seen had been captured by our retinue, and was held in the stable at our disposal as a hostage!

There is this beauty about justice in Persia, that everybody administers it to suit himself. There exist in Hamadan municipal dungeons, gendarmerie prisons, and Black Holes of Calcutta in the Governor's palace, wherein lie in chains the more notorious malefactors of the province. But in general people find it simpler and more satisfactory to attend to a private enemy themselves—when they can catch him. No great Khan, for instance, would dream of carrying on his affairs without shutting up his villagers whenever he chooses. And sometimes he shuts up another Khan's villagers. Even in a certain *Firengi* office known to me have I seen an upper chamber reserved for the entertainment of recalcitrant rug weavers who eat up the money advanced them for wool and dyes. There they sit, not too uncomfortably, nourished at the expense of the *Firengi*, and no doubt more richly than they are used, until their friends produce the

JIMMY & CO.

money or give satisfactory bond that the rug will be completed according to contract. It is the custom of the country, and nobody objects to it—unless possibly the weaver. And he always has the recourse of taking *bast* at one of the mosques or sacred tombs which in every town are an asylum not to be violated even by the Shah.

So the boy whom the servants suspected of knowing too much about Jimmy was locked up with the cow until the Sah'b was ready for him. The Sah'b was ready for him after dinner. Into the library the prisoner was accordingly dragged, an extremely ragged and dejected looking urchin, who was not too dejected to cast a curious eye upon the strange contrivances whereon we perched, to say nothing of the counterfeit presentment of Lucrezia Crivelli. Being put through the third degree, the prisoner first declared that he knew nothing about any puppy whatsoever. Under pressure he then admitted that he had chanced to catch sight at Sheverin, three miles out of town, far away from his mother's garden, *a* puppy. But it was not a white puppy with black spots. It was a yellow puppy with no spots at all. And no amount of subtle suggestion could make him endow that puppy with curls or give any account of its origin, history, or habits. What the bastinado might have brought forth I do not know. If one happens to lack the proper appliances for beating a man on the soles of his bare feet, or if one dislikes the commotion which that treatment usually brings forth, one can always hire the police to do it. And the better you tip the policeman the more stripes will he administer. In that respect, however, we did not follow the customs of the country. We merely threatened to, and let our helpless victim go back to the stable with his

PERSIAN MINIATURES

captors. There they all spent the night sociably under the same *kursi*, and the next morning the victim departed in peace about his own unholy affairs.

We had quite given up hope of ever seeing Jimmy again when he was brought back one day by a policeman who flatly refused to say where he had found him. Alas, poor Jimmy! Never have I seen a humbler little dog. Of course he knew us. He could not have forgotten us. We saw it in his half-averted eye. But we also saw that he entertained no hope of forgiveness. What was most pitiful, however, were the marks of chafing around his neck, the wounds on his head, and the unutterable dirtiness of his once white coat. So we killed—well, not a fatted calf for him, since that would have transgressed the laws of the Medes and the Persians. We let him gobble up more chops and chicken bones than were good for him, though, and he was nearly gobbled up in turn, out of jealousy, by the common or garden *sag* who had taken the place of his old friend the yellow cur with a needle in his throat. And it was not long before Jimmy became as handsome and humorous as ever, and a firm friend of the hard-hearted watch-dog.

But did that escapade cure him of running away? Of course not! Can Jimmy change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin?

IX

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

The Passion Play at Ammergau, with its immense audiences, the seriousness of its actors, the passionate emotion of its spectators, brought to my mind something of which I had read an account lately; something produced, not in Bavaria or Christendom at all, but far away in that wonderful East, from which, whatever airs of superiority Europe may justly give itself, all our religion has come, and where religion, of some sort or other, has still an empire over men's feelings such as it has nowhere else.

Matthew Arnold: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM

I

WE HAD been in Hamadan barely a week when, one afternoon as we went about on a round of calls, we met a file of small boys who did not conceal their disposition to hoot at us. One could hardly blame them. Of all human employments, that of disseminating pasteboards has always seemed to me the most impossible to take seriously. What further attracted me to the small boys, however, was a toy flagstaff they were playing with, flying a three-cornered green rag and tipped with a piece of tin cut into the silhouette of an open hand. And that night or the next as we came home from a dinner party we passed several lighted mosque windows, wide-pointed arches filled with white paper and crisscrossed by heavy



THE FLAGELLANTS

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

wooden bars, behind which we could hear sounds of chanting, interrupted by curious single volleys of clapping.

"Hello!" exclaimed one of my companions. "Is it *Moharrem* already?"

It was *Moharrem* already. *Moharrem* is the first month of the Mohammedan year, which as everybody knows is a lunar year and therefore walks backward through the seasons. So don't imagine that if the first of *Moharrem* fell on November 30th in 1913, it will continue with the monotony of our own calendar to fall on November 30th. On the contrary, as it turns up eleven days or so earlier every twelvemonth, it will not return to that part of the year until 1946—and then will probably hit another date.

However, even outside of Persia I had seen enough of what Persians do in *Moharrem* to look forward with vast interest to what they might do here.

II

The month of *Moharrem* means far more to the people of Iran than it does to their co-religionists in other countries, for reasons which I shall have to take a little time to explain. We have heard a good deal of late of Pan-Islamism, Holy Wars, and what not; but those who say most about these things say very little about the fact that the Arabs, the Turks, the Turkomans, and the Afghans on one side, and the Persians and most of the Mohammedan Indians, on the other, love each other about as much as Queen Elisabeth and the Pope used to, or the Spaniards and the Dutch. For aside from questions of race, language, and so forth, the Mohammedan world is divided against itself on a religious question which the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Persians take much more to heart than any of their neighbours.

When the Prophet died in 632, he left no explicit directions as to his successor in the leadership of the new theocratic state he had founded. It had, to be sure, been more or less vaguely understood that his mantle would fall upon his cousin and son-in-law Ali. This Ali, gloriously known as the Lion of God, had been after the Prophet's first wife, Mother of the Moslems (on whom be peace!), the Prophet's first convert. Ali had also married the Prophet's daughter Fatma, by whom he had two sons. These two, Hasan and Hosein, were the sole surviving male descendants of the Prophet, who had pronounced their father his son, his vicar, and his delegate. And the Persians claim that during Mohammed's farewell pilgrimage to Mecca the archangel Gabriel appeared to him, instructing him to proclaim Ali as his legal successor, and that on his way back to Medina the Prophet did so.

Be that as it may, there was enough indefiniteness with regard to his intentions for the Arabs to elect as the first Caliph or temporal successor of Mohammed another member of his family, his father-in-law Abu Bekr. This Abu Bekr—otherwise Father of the Full Moon, or of Mohammed's youngest wife Aishah—was succeeded in 634 by Omar, who ten years later met a violent end; and after him came Osman or Othman, assassinated in turn in 656. Then only did Ali, no longer a young man, who had hitherto been accorded merely a vague spiritual primacy, inherit the temporal power as fourth Caliph. In the twenty-four years since the Prophet's death, however, the new Mohammedan state had grown so rapidly

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

that to the parent province of Arabia had already been added Syria, Egypt, and Persia. It was a state of imperial size, and the Lion of God proved not to be of the temper of an emperor. Dissensions accordingly arose between him and the warlike governors of Egypt and Syria, which certain fanatics undertook to settle by stabbing the three of them and holding a new election. But this praiseworthy project was successful only in the case of Ali. He was killed in 661 at Kufa, a town of that Mesopotamian region known in the Near East as Irak Arabi. The Caliphate then passed to Ali's elder son Hasan, who soon abdicated in favour of Moavia, governor of Syria and founder of the Ommayad dynasty of Damascus. Hasan retired to the holy city of Medina, where about 669 he was poisoned by one of his numerous wives.

When Moavia died in 680, the people of Kufa sent word to Ali's second son Hosein, who also lived in Medina, that they would recognise him as the new Caliph instead of Moavia's son Yezid. Yezid, however, lost no time in taking steps to secure his own succession. When Hosein arrived at Kufa with his family and a small retinue the gates were closed against him, and he was surrounded by a vastly superior force under the command of Amr ibn Saad, the conqueror of Egypt. Seeing himself betrayed and hopelessly outnumbered, Hosein asked permission of Amr to return in safety to Medina, or even to proceed to Yezid's court at Damascus. This parley was cut short by Obeidullah ibn Ziad, the governor of Kufa just appointed by Yezid, who sent his lieutenant Shimr to insist that Amr demand Hosein's unconditional surrender or resign his command. Hosein refused to surrender.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

In spite of the odds against him, he took up his position on the hillock of Kerbela, above the Euphrates, and prepared for battle. This was on the ninth day of *Moharrem*, in the year of the Hegira 61, or 681 of our era.

History and legend are so intertwined in the story that the forces of the Arabs from Medina are variously reported to have been from seventy to six hundred men, horse and foot, while those of the Syrian cavalry amounted to four or five thousand. The chief Al Hurr, who had first intimated to Hosein that the gates of Kufa would not open to him, now went over to the latter with his brother, his son, and one of his slaves. So small a reinforcement, however, naturally had no effect on the final outcome. After a heroic resistance of two days, during which the beleaguered Arabs had also to fight against sun and thirst, Hosein alone remained alive of the men of his party. At nightfall of the 10th of *Moharrem* he was shot in the mouth by an arrow, while attempting to get water from the Euphrates. His sister Zeineb, rushing out from her tent, adjured the Syrians to spare the grandson of the Prophet. But their answer was to set the camp on fire and to strike down Hosein under thirty-three swords and lances. His head was then cut off by Shimr who, according to the historian Masudi, carried the bloody trophy to his chief Obeidullah, chanting exultingly:

“Cover me with gold and with silver to my stirrups,
For I have killed the *Seid* of the veiled face.
I have slain the most noble of men by his father and his mother,
The most noble when they produce titles of nobility.”

The governor of Kufa sent the head, together with the women and children of Hosein’s family, to Yezid at

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

Damascus. And Masudi adds that the cruel Caliph further mutilated with his staff the head of his rival, until rebuked by an old man who said: "Often have I seen the lips of the Prophet joined to those lips in a kiss."

These events are what the Persians and other Shiites, or schismatics, commemorate during the month of *Moharrem*. It is for them a month of mourning, during which they wear black or otherwise display signs of grief, and neither weddings nor other festivities take place in those thirty days. For the Persians, however, it is not only a religious matter. Their history is longer and more glorious than that of the Arabs, by whom they were conquered during the Caliphate of Omar. Mesopotamia was a Persian province until the second Caliph captured Ctesiphon in 637. Four years later his army swept through the very passes which the Turks and the Russians have lately brought back to the notice of the world, and by the battle of Nehavend, some fifty miles south of Hamadan, the last of the Sasanian kings was finally defeated and the greater part of Persia fell into their hands. This blow to the national pride is perhaps the chief reason why the Persians deny the validity of the Caliphate. Not only do they refuse to recognise the first three Caliphs—or any of the others, for that matter—but they execrate them, and Omar in particular, with a zeal which to the Arabs and the Turks is the height of blasphemy. "O God, curse Omar! Then Abu Bekr and Omar! Then Osman and Omar! Then Omar! Then Omar!" is an imprecation often and solemnly repeated by the Shiites to the horror of all true Sunnite or orthodox Mohammedans. The Persians also celebrate the anniversary of the assassination of Omar (may his name be cursed!).

PERSIAN MINIATURES

with the greater zest because he was stabbed by a Persian slave. And one of the ways by which they still mark that day of rejoicing is to burn the hated Caliph in effigy.

The case is the more curious because the conquest of Omar all but put an end to Zoroastrianism. Only in southeastern Persia and in Bombay do there remain a few adherents of this ancient faith. But the Persians fiercely contend that Ali and his descendants alone were the true successors of the Prophet. The tombs of Ali and Hosein at Nejef and Kerbela, in Mesopotamia, are to them places of pilgrimage almost if not quite as sacred as Mecca and Medina. Other members of the holy family are buried at Kazimein and Samarra, north of Baghdad, while in their own country the Persians venerate at Meshed the tomb of the eighth of the descendants of the Prophet, Riza. In all there were twelve of these personages, who are known as the *Imams*. They are regarded as more than mortals, whose natures were without sin and whose bodies cast no shadow. The last one disappeared in 873; and although a tomb of him exists at Samarra the Persians believe that he never died, but will reappear in the great mosque of Meshed at the Judgment Day as the *Mahdi* or Guide.

Another element of nationality enters into the legend of Hosein in that the Persians devoutly believe his wife, Harar or Omm Leila, to have been the daughter of Yezdigird III, the last of the Sasanians. According to Persian history as set forth by Firdeusi, in the *Shab Nameh*, this second national dynasty was descended from the earlier mythical dynasty which has partially been identified with the Achæmenians of the heroic period. The story is that the Persian princess was carried away to

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

Medina as a prisoner of war, where Omar (may his name be cursed!) ordered her to be sold as a slave but Ali intervened and gave her to his son Hosein. And, similarly, the Persians trace the ancestry of the Safevi dynasty, which restored the independence of Persia in 1499, to the seventh *Imam*, Musa Kazim. Thus the ceremonies of *Moharrem* are, it is true, a rite of the religion which took the place of their own more ancient one. But they are at the same time an assertion of national pride against the Arab conqueror and against those Turkish and Afghan neighbours who have so often encroached on Persian soil. Time, of course, has a way of softening religious dissensions. When, however, they are so intricately entangled with others of the sentiments that lie deepest in the heart of man, it is not safe to count too much on the unity of the Moslem world. At any rate, the Persians still piously chant in *Moharrem*:

"The black-hearted people who slew the offspring of the Prophet with malice:

"They claim to belong to the religion, but they murder the lord of the religion."

III

Although it had for several days been patent that something was in the air, the first positive sign of it we had in our own house. Then the servants, who had unaccountably been going about with their clothes unbuttoned at the throat, announced that as it was the day of the Little Slaughter, otherwise the seventh of *Moharrem*, they would be obliged to do as little work as possible. This, I must confess, seemed no new resolution in those pictur-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

esque underlings, no one of whom ever gave us the impression that he would die of overwork. But an inquisitive ear could not help being caught by that name of Little Slaughter—which I believe is the anniversary of the day when the *Imam* Hosein and his party were turned aside from Kufa by the chief Al Hurr.

I afterward realised that if I had known Persian, or if I had been an older resident of Hamadan, I might have seen a great deal more than I did. But there was something even for the most ignorant newcomer to see on the tenth of *Moharrem*. This greatest anniversary of the Persian year is known as the Great Slaughter. And it is commemorated throughout the country by a species of Passion Play which has a more familiar counterpart in the Easter celebrations of the Greek Church, as in the dramatic representations of Oberammergau and other parts of the Catholic world. In Tehran and elsewhere theatres exist, or are improvised, in which the tragedy of the Family of the Tent, as the Persians name the heroic campers at Kerbela, is acted out with more than historical detail. I presume some such thing might have been found in Hamadan, though no one of our colony had ever seen it. One of our number, indeed, was highly scandalised that Christians should betray any interest in proceedings so heathenish. We did, however, see something. And in its way it was something stranger and more picturesque than I had ever seen before.

We saw it from the roof of a building that had been erected for a “movie” theatre! The inner workings of that theatre remained immovable during the whole of my sojourn in Hamadan; but no film that has since been exhibited there can have come up to the setting and the

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

scene on which we, in company with not a few of the people of the country, looked down. Immediately below us ran a horizontal street, opening in front of our high gallery into an irregular square. The right side of it was bounded by a series of broken vaults and arches which go by the name of Masjid-i-Shah—being, some one told me, all that is left of a mosque begun there about a hundred years ago by Fat'h Ali Shah. The mud walls of the Bazaar enclosed the rest of the uneven amphitheatre. Behind it, bearing rather toward the left, rose a few tiers of flat adobe roofs, while farther away toward the right, where the river made a hollow in the clay-coloured town, we could see in the northwest the white glitter of the plain. There was snow, too, on every projecting bit of roof or masonry, contrasting vividly with the dark masses of spectators that lined all the nearer roofs and the outer edges of the square. This note of black and white was decoratively repeated by groups of women who stood together on two mounds facing the square and at two points on either side of it, the white triangles of their veils and the white fillets encircling their crowns cut out against the black or dark blue of their loose domino. And there were plenty of white turbans above dark robes to carry the impression a little farther.

I do not mean to pretend that there was any lack of colour on this open-air stage roofed with so intense a blue. But what was most striking about the look of the crowd was its general soberness of tone. There were none of the brilliant reds and yellows which the Turks love. The prevailing black and brown of the men's costumes was varied by dull blues and greens, with only an occasional touch of russet, buff, or salmon. All the more conspicuous, there-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

fore, was a fantastic little spangled green pavillion that stood at the rear of the rising stage. This was supposed to represent Damascus, or Yezid's palace therein. A less ornamental red tent downstage at the right was at once Kufa and the camp of the villains Amr and Shimr. In the centre and toward the left of the stage were pitched two smaller white tents, for the camp of Kerbela.

All this made enough to look at, in the clear Persian sunlight, till a strange object suddenly advanced into sight behind the ruins of the mosque. It looked like a furled standard, horizontally striped with brilliant bands of colour, and its tall staff was surmounted by an upright hand of brass. According to Habib this hand commemorated the mutilated one of the *Imam* Abu Fazl, though Masudi says in "The Meadows of Gold" that Shimr cut off the right hand of Hosein as well as his head. And I believe a hand is a common symbol of the Holy Family of Islam, whose five chief members are Mohammed, Fatma, Ali, Hasan, and Hosein. At any rate, this picturesque furled standard, which is not meant to be unfurled, being merely a sort of circular gonfalon, presently reached the end of the street below us. It was followed by a quantity of decorative banners on shorter staves. Some of them were black, others were fringed and inscribed with Arabic letters, while two triangular oriflammes were made to stand straight out by being fastened together at the point. Behind the banners clattered a cavalcade of men at arms, some in scarlet, others carrying long, slender lances. And after them marched a company of men on foot. What was most unusual about the latter was not that they wore black, but that they were bare-headed. For to uncover the hair in public is the last thing for a

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

Mohammedan to do. These beat their bare breasts in unison, as they marched. Which instantly made me recognise, in the irregular measured thud of right hands on left shoulder blades, the curious sound of clapping I had heard behind the lighted paper windows of the mosques.

This procession passed under us and took its place at Kerbela, on the left side of the square. Next there appeared a band of water carriers, each with a goatskin slung across his back and swinging in his hand a hollow gourd or an oblong brass bowl. The patron of this guild is the standard bearer Abbas, the *Imam's* uncle, who was killed in a desperate attempt to bring to the beleaguered women and children at Kerbela a little water from the Euphrates. Behind the water carriers trotted a caravan of travellers from Medina, on mule back. The most notable thing about them was their luggage, consisting of funny little painted trunks and the most enviable saddlebags. They took their places immediately below us, facing the square. And after them came more banners and flagellants. Their leader, who bore the tall furled and banded gonfalon, jerked it up and down in a sort of rhythm, and the flagellants hopped in time to it, beating their breasts and chanting "Hosein ah!" This commotion so alarmed one of the mules of the caravan that he upset his unlucky rider, together with his boxes and saddlebags, into a sea of mud.

There was quite an interval before a larger and more picturesque procession made its appearance. It emerged from the Bazaar at the left, as if to emphasize its distinction from the party of Hosein, and for greater pomp it was preceded by two lines of gendarmes. This touch had a special savour for some of us, in that those gendarmes were

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the creation of our own compatriot Mr. W. M. Shuster, ex-Treasurer-General of Persia. This more magnificent Syrian procession flaunted several furled gonfalons of the brass hand, and many more banners and oriflammes. They were followed by the cavaliers and lancers of Amr ibn Saad, and by a caravan of camels. The riders of the latter were dressed in the Syrian cloak and scarf, while the trappings of their beasts were far more gorgeous than anything displayed by the humble mules from Medina. And next appeared a most mysterious ornament or emblem that advanced glittering above the heads of the crowd. On top of the pole that carried it was a cross bar, and at either end of the cross bar some little domed and pinnaclaled edifice of brass, while between them stood upright, its point nodding forward as if by its own weight, what might have been a sword of slenderest steel. What this signified, if anything, no one could tell me. But I forgot to wonder about it when I saw who edged next into sight, bare-headed like the breast-beaters, but dressed in white smocks, commemorating the shroud worn by Hosein at Kerbela, that were streaked scarlet with their own blood. They marched sideways in two long lines, the left hand of each in the belt of his neighbour, holding in his right a sword with which he slashed his own head. A few of those extraordinary flagellants I had seen before, in Constantinople. But there it was in an enclosed courtyard, at dusk, among an unfriendly people. Here in the brilliant sunlight of their own country, pressed by their friends and neighbours, chanting so hoarsely after that mysterious thing of brass and steel that glittered above the dark caps of the crowd, they made an effect wilder and more frenetic than anything I have ever seen. Many of them

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

were no more than boys. And a few of them carried babies in their arms, whose little heads they had scratched in one or two places to expiate the blood of the martyred Hosein. Such wounds, the Persians say, are not as other wounds; for the Prophet miraculously heals them. I must add that several of the men wore white skull caps, while others seemed to take care how far they swung their swords. Even so, however, those white smocks were gruesomely reddened, and for days afterward bandaged heads walked about Hamadan.

The banners gathered in a mass of colour below us at the right, near the red tent of Kufa. The flagellants made for Kerbela, forming a great ring in front of Hosein's tent at the left. The camels from Damascus ranged in front of the mules from Medina. As for the lancers of the conqueror of Egypt, they disappointed me by curveting out of sight behind the ruined vaults. But they soon reappeared upstage through an arch. So the arena was now completely set. And I fear that many things passed upon it which escaped our eyes. One reason was that we were, after all, rather far away—as it were among the gallery gods. Another was that in spite of policemen armed with whips and walking barricades made up of two men and a long pole, the spectators incessantly encroached upon the stage; and what looked like a friendly conversation between two citizens of Hamadan might really be a proud parley between Hosein and Amr of Egypt. Presently, however, there took place an unmistakable piece of action, when the hosts of Syria charged those of Arabia. I must confess that my eye was not sharp enough to detect any casualties. But when the two armies had withdrawn to their respective sides of the field, I suddenly discovered

PERSIAN MINIATURES

a lifeless body lying on the ground not far from the central tent.

An Arab hurried out of the tent of Hosein and knelt beside the corpse, followed by a woman who burst into loud sobs. Who could the dead man be? Was he the standard bearer Abbas? Was he Ali Akbar, the *Imam's* son, who also lost his life in an attempt to get water from the Euphrates? Was he the young Kasim, Hosein's nephew, whose story is one of the most affecting incidents in the Persian legend? Kasim was, I believe, the fifth to volunteer for the perilous adventure of bringing water from the river, during those two burning days under the Mesopotamian sun. He was only sixteen years old, and both his mother and his uncle did their best to dissuade him. But the matter was finally settled by the discovery of a letter or will of his father, the Caliph Hasan, prophesying for him the glory of martyrdom and directing that he was first to marry his cousin Zobeida. The wedding accordingly took place on the battlefield. But if it took place at Masjid-i-Shah I saw nothing of it—unless a second encounter between the two troops of cavaliers was the attack which broke up the marriage festivities and cost the life of the young bridegroom.

At the close of this mêlée the Syrians held the field. Whereupon they set on fire the central tent, which was supposed to shelter the *Imam's* Persian princess, his sister Zeineb, the young widow Zobeida, the widow of Hasan, and other women and children. This sudden blaze in the centre of the square, made more spectacular by a quantity of straw concealed in the burning tent, was the signal for a passionate outburst of weeping from the crowd. There had been tears and sobs before, es-

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

pecially when the corpse was left on the ground at the end of the first brush between the lancers. But now there arose so general a sound of grief that one could not help being impressed. Near us sat a Persian lady who had first been extremely scandalised by the loose way in which the men and women of our party sat together, and who then had shown every sign of uneasiness lest her skirts be defiled by those of the missionary next her—the more so as a wet Christian is far more impure than a dry one. This evidently orthodox person was one of the first to shed tears over the perils of the Family of the Tent. They were real tears, because I saw them splash down her cheeks. She was not so orthodox, I must add, but what she lifted her thick veil in order to see what was going on. And now not only did her tears shower anew, but she beat her breast, tore her hair, and very nearly jerked her veil off altogether. Even so impure an unbeliever as myself could not help feeling touched at such evidence that a tragedy over twelve hundred years old could still work so powerfully upon the hearts of those who beheld it. Then the weeping lady suddenly dried her tears and demanded of another lady in a black domino, rather crossly, why she didn't cry. And having received what was no doubt a satisfactory answer, the tears began to rain again out of her own better disciplined eyes. At that, I must admit, I, who am naturally of a suspicious nature, began to dart sceptical glances about me. I remembered that at the theatre of the Passion Play in Tehran there is a functionary known as the Auxiliary of Tears. I went so far as to ask myself if there could be onions in any of the innumerable handkerchiefs I saw. But it opportunely came back to me that this was at

PERSIAN MINIATURES

once a religious and dramatic performance, in a land where other dramatic performances do not exist, that I myself had more than once nearly drowned in the tears of my own compatriots, shed over no greater a matter, for instance, than "The Music Master," and that if I chose that moment to probe the dark subject of female lamentations I would miss what was going forward in the square of Masjid-i-Shah.

The flames of the tent were put out by the water carriers, who drew from their goatskins the water of the Euphrates which Hosein and his companions had so bitterly lacked. In the meantime the flagellants in black made a circle about the place of the tent, beating their breasts more vehemently than ever, striking their heads in despair, and showering on their heads what remained of the half-burnt straw of the tent, as well as fresh-chopped straw from a supply they had—representing the sands of Mesopotamia.

By the time the last scene was ready to take place the crowd had burst all bounds, filling the amphitheatre with an uneasy mass of dark felt caps. Through it the flagellants in black slowly made their way, led by the mysterious brass emblem, to the standards massed near the red tent of Amr ibn Saad. The flagellants in white followed them, with their flying guard of pointed oriflammes. Then the scarlet lancers and the Syrian camels—one of them, splendidly caparisoned, mounted by a personage in green, and others bearing aloft the captive women and children from Medina, with wooden triangles about their necks—performed a serpentine progress through the crowd from Kufa to Damascus. At Oberammergau, of course, there never would have been such

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

disorder or properties so primitive. But at Oberammergau, with all its precision and solemnity, there never could be a spectacle so picturesque. Back from Damascus to Kufa the slow pageant wound, this time with white biers borne on men's shoulders between the horsemen and the camels. And so, amid the sobs and outcries of the faithful, the players made their circuitous way into the press of the Bazaar.

IV

How many times this confused and fragmentary version of the Passion Play was repeated, I cannot say. I did not happen to go back to Masjid-i-Shah until *Moharrem* was over. But the next day I saw in the street another procession that was a thing to remember. Every quarter of the town—corresponding to the mediæval parishes—has its own pageant of *Moharrem*, got up by public subscription, by the generosity of one well-to-do citizen, or even by that of citizens no more of this world. There is consequently great rivalry between the different processions, and their routes have to be mapped out with care lest two of them chance to meet. In that unhappy case, since neither will yield the right of way, the blood of the faithful is more than likely to flow anew.

Our quarter, or the quarter nearest our extramural suburb, is named Kolapa. What that name may mean, I don't know. Perhaps nothing. At any rate, Habib thought it necessary for me to inspect the cortège of Kolapa, in preference to others farther afield. I saw it, accordingly, in surroundings perhaps not quite so theatrical as the square of Masjid-i-Shah, yet characteristic enough. These surroundings were those of a cemetery,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

lying on uneven ground and encircled by the mud walls and houses of the town. A Persian cemetery is always to be recognised by its flat, haphazard stones, without shrub or tree for beauty. They say, alas, that cemeteries may also be recognised by other senses than that of sight. For in Persia no regulations exist as to the depth of graves, and your Iranian is no man to dig deeper than he need. Which does not prevent him from collecting the frozen snow of winter in hollows among the graves, and storing it in some convenient dugout between them for the sherbets of summer. I discovered no such arrangements in this particular cemetery; but the waters of a *jub*, an irrigation channel, out of which no one ever hesitates to drink, ran merrily along its lower side. On its highest point, in suggestive proximity to the graves, stood a gallows. At that moment no highwayman happened to be swinging from it—to the regret of Habib, who coveted for me the most characteristic impressions of his native town.

To that end he escorted me to the roof of a public bath encroaching upon one edge of the cemetery. No house in Hamadan is a skyscraper; but as baths like to burrow underground, their roofs are not too difficult to reach. This roof we found in the possession of a company of ladies, who looked a little doubtful at my appearance in their midst. However, those of them who occupied the highest point of vantage at once recognised that it was their duty to retire in my favour. And in the face of so evident a ruling of public opinion what could I do but scramble up in their stead, accept a basket which a youth handed me to sit on, and endow him with the ridiculously excessive tip of some two cents.

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

From the fact that this youth wore nothing but one striped towel, which he seemed to find entirely adequate protection against the eager and the nipping air of a winter climate of Colorado or the Engadine, I took him for an attendant of the bath beneath us. His business among the ladies on the roof was to turn over with his bare feet a quantity of manure spread out there in the sun to dry, and to regulate the unfathomable operations of a chimney covered with an Ali Baba jar of blue glaze. Every so often he would remove this jar, by means of the handles conveniently encircling its neck. Between times he held impassioned conversations with his colleagues below, through a hole in a dome where a glass bull's eye had once been. Out of it escaped a lazy cloud of steam into the clear air.

Other youths appeared from time to time, offering for sale mysterious condiments which the ladies were more eager to taste than I. One such dainty looked like a mess of boiled beets, wrapped in the grandfather of all filthy rags. Another was a species of macaroon. The favourite was a collection of poisonous looking candies, which the ladies fed incessantly to babies in funny little round spangled caps. As for the babies, toward whom their mothers otherwise exhibited undisguised affection, they did not curl up and die. On the contrary, they crowed and waved their arms and legs, quite like the most scientifically brought up babies in the world, and tried to jump off the roof of the bath in order to join their papas on the opposite side of the street. These gentlemen sat comfortably on their heels in the sun, engaged in the pleasures of The Chase or smoking thick straight pipes, and no doubt exchanging scandalous opinions with regard to

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the not too rigorously veiled beauties perched on the roof of the bath. I had heard terrible stories of the fanaticism of the Persians during *Mobarrem*, and had in fact been rather struck by their unwillingness to allow me to see the inside of a bath or a mosque. Consequently it pleased me not a little to discover these good Hamadanis so human and friendly, and so disposed to let both me and my camera into what had the air of being a large family party.

The procession, when at last it appeared, was very much like the processions of *Masjid-i-Shah*. This time, however, I enjoyed the advantage of seeing it very much nearer at hand, if in a less picturesque perspective. And it contained several new and interesting features. The first sign of it was one of those files of small boys carrying a little banner and a hand, beating their breasts and chanting shrilly the names of the martyred *Imams*. Behind them rose a sound of deeper voices, intermingled with a barbaric blare of brass. Then from the narrow street debouching upon the cemetery emerged two long lines of Mr. Shuster's gendarmes and thirty-two pairs of horses. Some were mounted, others were led by grooms; and the high saddles of the latter were covered with handsome stuffs and embroideries. One fine stallion—a mare, for that matter, is rarely seen on the streets in Persia, and a gelding almost never—was caparisoned in black, being the charger of Hosein. Next came the three kinds of banners we had seen the day before. The staves of a few were tipped by the symbolic hand of the Holy Family, those of most ending in a spherical gilt cone. There followed the more enigmatic metal emblem at the head of the flagellants. As borne by the men of Kolapa this dis-

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

played no little brass temples, but two thin steel blades lower than the one in the centre, all three of them being mounted on flat pear-shaped bases of steel which were chased with Arabic lettering; and from the bar supporting them hung a quantity of shawls and embroideries of price. With regard to this wonderful emblem Habib gave me to understand something about Ali's famous sword of Zul-fikar, saying something also about Mohammed and Hossein. But between my lack of tongues and Habib's lack of letters, I do not pretend to explain the true symbolism of those nodding swords, whose points were weighted with tassels.

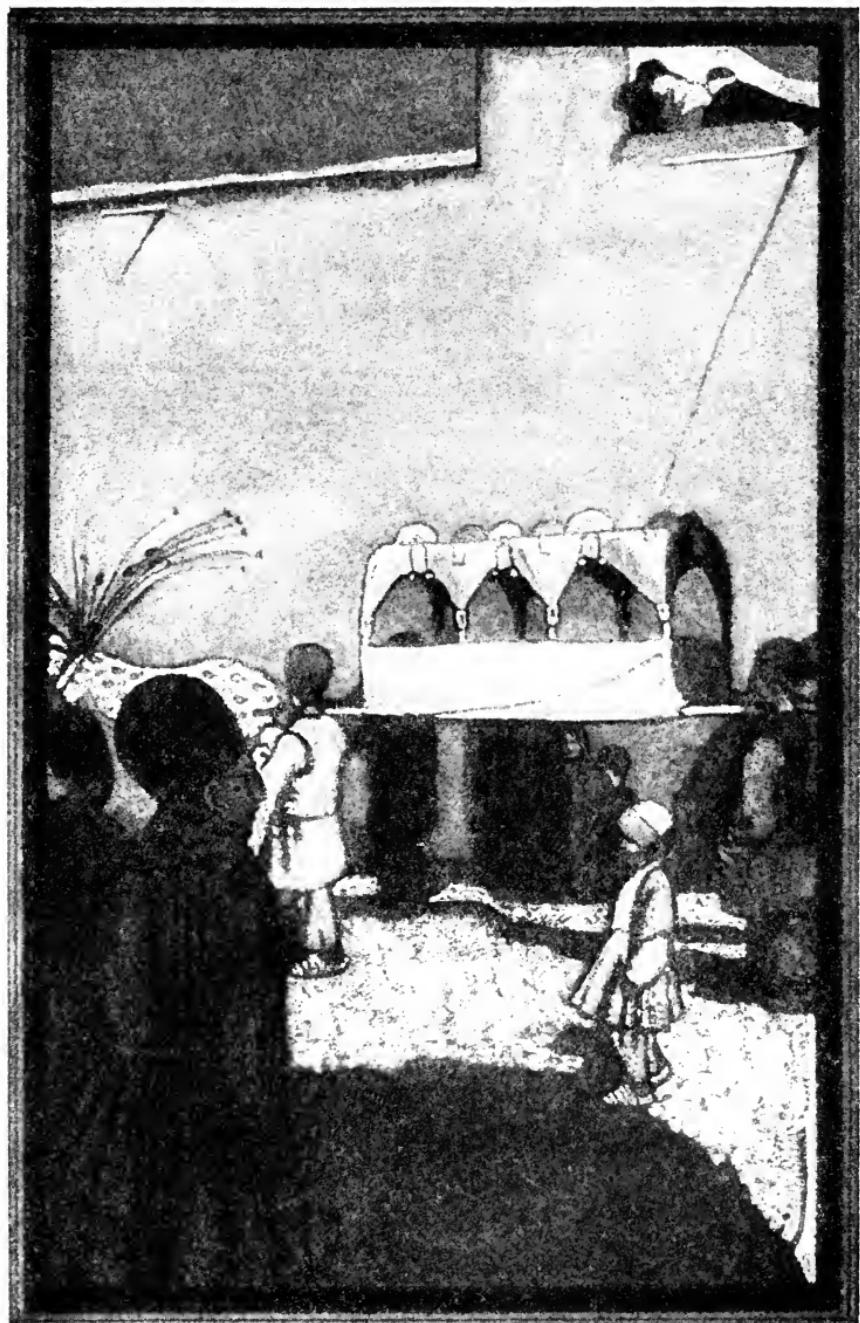
What came next was an object I had not seen before. It was a staff swathed in white gauze and white wax flowers, on top of which were three curved metal prongs sustaining three small winged and crowned cherubs. After them marched an assembly of *Seids*, descendants of the Prophet, rhythmically striking their green turbans. Then followed two companies of flagellants, chanting a wild antiphone out of which I could distinguish only the names of the *Imams*. There were no men in white this time. All were in black, beating their breasts and throwing handfuls of chopped straw over their bare heads. Many of them, however, despite the keen December air, were stripped to the waist. And they gave me an excellent opportunity to study the secrets of a Persian coiffure. I had noticed how seldom any hair was visible on a forehead that wore a *kola*, and how often the wearers of that tall felt cap affected the shaven neck which is not unknown in our own part of the world. I now discovered that most of them had shaved a wide strip all the way from their foreheads to their necks, leaving only the long

PERSIAN MINIATURES

side locks which are the pride of a Persian dandy. Others exhibited a wide half moon of naked skin, sweeping around the temples and the crown, or a great cowl that left nothing of their hair but a fringe like a Japanese doll's; while the heads of a few were shorn completely bare.

The second part of the procession was led by a band of buglers and trumpeters, whose copper trumpets were longer than any trombone I ever saw in the triumphal march of "Aida." And what sounds burst from them! There followed a squadron of lancers, and a small boy in green on a horse with black trappings. This small boy impersonated, according to my companion, the young *Imam* Ali Asghar, who was taken captive to Damascus. And behind him were borne, on two ornamental biers, the head and the headless trunk of the martyred Hosein. At sight of these amazingly cadaverous relics, which seemed to be made of wax or papier maché, the spectators fell into their wildest tears and sobs.

So many features of the rest of this part of the pageant were new to me that I cannot be quite sure of their order. But I saw a white box of some kind, surmounted by an image of the dove that flew from Kerbela to Medina to tell the Prophet in his tomb of his grandson's tragic end. There was also a live white dove, perched on a white litter which was supposed to contain the young widow Zobeida. The *Imam's* daughter was impersonated by a small boy whose sobs excited the liveliest sympathy. So did the sight of several other litters, bearing away to slavery in Damascus the unhappy Zeineb and other women and children of the Family of the Tent. In me, however, the emotion they chiefly excited was the baser



ZOBEIDA'S LITTER

PERSIAN MINIATURES

one of covetousness, at the spectacle of the shawls, rugs, and figured stuffs that protected the travellers from the sun.

Behind the palanquins of the Holy Family appeared a series of quaint floats, which were generally no more than slabs of wood carried on the heads of one or two men. One of the first of them supported a rocking cradle, perhaps that of the child killed in Hosein's arms. On another stood a small lion, cousin, german to the friend of Androcles, who befriended the defenders of Kerbela. He bent over a wounded Arab and attempted in none too leonine a manner to pull an arrow out of his breast. The greater number of the objects thus borne past were more gruesome, being the mutilated members of the lesser martyrs. A pair of legs would be represented by a pair of big Russian boots, lying heel to heel. Other more realistic human parts would miraculously twitch as you watched them—in response, I discovered, to the jerking of a secret string. But once in a while the movement of an eyelid or of a lip betrayed the fact that the corpse was a boy with part of his body concealed. And in front of many of the dismembered trunks a head was borne on a pike—too small to look very lifelike, but from the necks of which drops of some sanguine liquid dripped on the heads and hands of those carrying the pikes.

Among the floats, one that interested me not least—though perhaps it was intended to represent an open litter of the kind you see on Persian journeys—contained, if you please, two youths dressed as Europeans. One of them, in a helmet and a Norfolk jacket which must once have come out of some cupboard in our colony, held a small spyglass with which he would intently search the

THE GREAT SLAUGHTER

horizon, every now and then clapping his hand to his head in a far from European manner. The other, in whom it required some imagination to see a woman, was spectacled like a missionary of the old school; and he held a brass barber's bowl, deeply nicked on one side, in which lay one of those small bleeding heads. The legend of these Europeans has many variations. The one I heard in Hamadan was that the wicked Caliph Yezid ordered the Dutch ambassador at his court—a Dutch ambassador, at Damascus, in 681!—to cut off Hosein's head. This the ambassador refused to do, and thereupon embraced the true faith as professed by the Shiites. When this scene is acted out at Masjid-i-Shah, the Europeans are dressed after their conversion in Oriental robes and borne off in high splendour. Another version has it that the *Firengi* ambassador tried to obtain terms for the Family of the Tent, and failing in his pious mission renounced his own faith. Still another represents a *Firengi* young woman as travelling, in the notorious manner of *Firengi* young women, over the plains of Irak Arabi, and arriving at Kerbela the night after the fatal battle. When she prepares to camp on the sacred ground, blood oozes out of the sand at every attempt of her servants to drive in a tent peg; and she finally goes to bed in Damascus. During the night Christ appears to her in a dream, telling her the tragic story of the hillock on which she tried to pitch her tent and revealing to her a vision of the battlefield, where a Beduin robber is prowling. The marauder is frightened away by the voice of Hosein, declaring from his tomb that there is no God but God. The tomb, over which doves are fluttering, is further guarded from desecration by a company consisting of Christ, Mohammed,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Moses, prophets, angels, and other holy persons. And the fair infidel is so moved that on waking up she at once announces her belief in Islam. But all these stories agree in the essential fact that even a dog of a Christian is more humane and accessible to the claims of the truth than the hated Syrian Caliph. A counterpart of this fact is the old proclamation of the conquering Sultans of Stambul that the death of one Shiïte was more agreeable to God than that of seventy Christians. Which are matters to remember in discussing Holy Wars and the spread of Pan-Islamism.

I have not mentioned the grave diggers who followed the corpses of the slain, carrying on their shoulders their pointed spades with a crossbar for the foot of the digger. More moving to the spectators was the train of captives near the end of the procession. Some of them were on mule back, and bloody knives pierced their heads and their bodies in the most startling fashion. Several of these wounded prisoners were urchins of no more than eight or ten, whose pallor and faintness were so well simulated that a louder chorus of sobs accompanied them up the street. Others marched afoot, with wooden yokes of slavery around their necks; and mounted lancers in helmets and scarlet coats drove them from behind with whips. Once in a while a flick of the lash would be too much like the real thing, drawing from the victim a yell of the most unfeigned. The arch-villain of the piece, though whether Amr or Shimr I cannot say, surveyed his bondmen haughtily from the rear, riding in gorgeous Syrian robes between two files of liveried attendants and greeted by the groans and derision of the populace. And last of all, loaded with saddlebags and those funny

A MOURNER OF KERBELA



PERSIAN MINIATURES

little painted boxes, ambled the mules of the humbler travellers, who were not too overcome by the prospect of the miseries that awaited them at the hands of Yezid (may his name be cursed!) to exchange the liveliest salutations with their friends along the way.

V

For three days the pageants of the Great Slaughter continued to fill the streets with clamour and colour and weeping. What I saw as I strolled about the town was too much like what I had already seen to bear retelling. The same picture was repeated innumerable times in every conceivable setting—though always against the same background of tawny walls, with the same strangeness of gonfalon and oriflamme and nodding emblematic blades, of lances and copper trumpets, of black and scarlet, and swaying palanquins. One such picture comes back to me the most vividly because it was set on the pointed stone arch of a bridge across the river. One of the horses in the procession wore on his bridle a fantastic ruff of white peacocks' feathers, rising above the head of the rider. And somewhere behind him a boy kneeled on one of the floats two men were carrying, his uplifted hands silhouetted against the sky like the symbol of a nation's faith and pride.

That night the servants told us that there would be no more pageants in the streets. The Governor had forbidden them. Was it, I wondered, because a custom reminiscent of Pilate and Barabbas permits these passion-players to demand of him the release of any prisoner they choose to name?

X

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

Un salon de huit ou onze personnes aimables, où la conversation est gaie, anecdotique, et où l'on prend un punch léger à minuit et demi, est l'endroit du monde où je me trouve le mieux.

Henri Beyle: ARMANCE

I said, "I am out hunting friends," and they told me, with a kind of eager gravity, "You will find them"

Jean Kenyon Mackenzie: BLACK SHEEP

I

AND do you fancy that because we lodge in mud houses and live four hundred, five hundred, I don't know how many hundred miles from a railroad, we have neither forms nor refinements? O la! la! But I came so near making the same mistake myself that when, from one moment to another, I packed my trunk for Persia, the last thing it occurred to me to put into it was a supply of visiting cards. Only by good luck did I happen to think of a dinner jacket. What, then, was my stupefaction in Hamadan to find myself launched before I knew it upon a torrent of tea, nibbling through mountains of dinners, and trotting about from door to door with as much zeal as would have done credit to the most sedulous man about town.

This phenomenon is perhaps to be interpreted in the light of strange tales a member of a certain Arctic expedi-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

tion used to tell me, about the relations that existed between different explorers after they had glared at each other a year or two across the same igloo. Our igloos, I hasten to add, are rather more commodious, and there are enough of them to afford us an occasional change of air. Still, for people brought up to go to the theatre, to listen to music, to visit museums and libraries, to lounge in clubs, and to read newspapers, Ecbatana, agreeable as it is, is after all a little barer of resources than some capitals. There is a post, to be sure; but it arrives only twice a week—when it doesn't happen to be held up by storms in the Caspian or snow in the passes—and our mail is anywhere from two weeks to two months old by the time we get it. So when we have answered our letters, balanced our accounts, beaten our servants, and otherwise dealt with the estate to which it hath pleased God to call us, what else have we to do, besides exercising our legs and our horses and playing at bowls with our Swiss friends, but to entertain or be entertained by each other? And how should we do it otherwise than as we used to do it at home?

It is curious, though, how an old matter will renew itself in an unfamiliar setting, and how a man will never tire of a game he has played all his life, simply because he cannot live long enough to exhaust its possibilities. The most hardened diner out, for instance, could hardly fail to be amused by a dinner party whose exact time could not be set. That is one charm of our dinner parties. For while Hamadan recognises the existence of noon, Hamadan sets its own watch by the variable hour of sunset—which also marks the boundary between date and date. Our unbelieving clocks therefore go their own

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

gait with the most refreshing independence, save for rare corrections by a not too accessible missionary sundial. And a guest who arrives at dinner in time for the coffee can always invoke the slowness of his watch; while those of the more moral sort make a practice of comparing time-pieces beforehand, in order not to appear on the scene of action an hour too early or too late!

There are other ways in which going out to dinner in Hamadan is given a flavour of its own. In front of us marches Habib, and perhaps Mehm'd Ali, too, bearing a lily. A lily? A lily—though not the same kind as the immortal one borne by Mr. Gilbert's pure young man in his mediæval hand. This lily—or *laleh*, which means the same thing—guides our patent-leathered feet past the pitfalls of Hamadan, being a candle stuck into a tin tube, with a small glass globe at the top to protect the flame from the winds of Elvend. By the light of it we make our way through dark and muddy streets to a sublime porte recessed in a semicircle of decorative plaster panels. At one end of this recess is a *Loggia dei Lanzi*, tenanted not by Benvenuto Cellinis but by a dozing beggar or two, who do not fail to profit by the time it takes that low wooden door to open. It is studded, the door, with spikes, bosses, knockers, locks, clamps, and hinges of brass which answer the flicker of the lily while Habib pounds, shouting “Mesh’dî Hasan! Ker’ Hasan! Hajji Hasan!” in a climax of honorific titles that are long in producing their effect. At last Hasan lets us into a vaulted brick octagon, with a door or a niche in each face of it. Whether Hasan be Meshedi or Kerbelai or Hajji; however, we shall never know, for he suddenly disappears.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

We, therefore, not knowing which way to turn, naturally turn to the right and come out into a court with a pool in the middle and a house at the farther end, where a woman clutching her veil in one hand and a *laleb* in the other waves us wildly away. Heavens! An *anderun*—or as you might understand better, a harem. “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house!” We flee precipitately in the opposite direction, blundering this time into another court, without a pool but with two more houses at either end of it. Wrong again, we learn, after more knocking and shouting. By this time Hasan has found the house-boy he went to look for, and we are led out of the octagon by a third door, through a low brick tunnel, into a cloister that is worth travelling five hundred miles from a railroad to see, encircled as it is by pillars of the inimitable Persian slimness, with stalactite capitals, set between a narrow ambulatory and a black pool. Our candles flicker the length of it, past a swimming star or two, to another crooked little passage of mystery that finally emerges into the biggest court of all, with a high *talar* at each end and another enormous pool between them. Up a steep flight of brick steps we climb, across a *talar*, through a huge room as cold as an iceberg, and on into a cosy little one where faggots snap in a stucco fireplace.

“Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.” But best is a dinner of pilau, and gossip therewith, on leaving which you stumble in the hall over a *kursi* with a circle of black hats sticking out from under it. Why this unusual ornament in a front hall? Because a few nights ago a thief either broke in or was let into the place, and, being discovered,

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

got lost like ourselves in the maze of courts and passages and so was caught. He turned out to be a one-handed man, which means that he was an old offender: the penalty of being light-fingered in Persia is to be relieved of the unruly member. The poor wretch is now in a fair way to lose his other hand as well. For he sits in a certain apartment at the Governor's, designed for such as he, where he is alternately cross-questioned and bastinadoed. Whence the protecting black hats, asleep around a *kursi* in the hall.

As for us, we are more than likely to have no protecting black hats about us on our journey home—especially when Madam Moon is a-sail in her Persian sky. This, alas, is a thing to cause shakings of the head. If we were Persians, and didn't happen to know the password of the night, it might be a thing to land us at the Governor's, too. Being merely *Firengis*, and therefore irresponsible in our acts, the watchmen we meet say nothing. The miniature brooks in the silent streets say more, gurgling gaily in the moonlight. Most of all say the dogs, on whose account it is well to carry a stout stick. But one night a watchman detached himself from his squad, taking pity on our defenceless condition, and saw us courteously home. And when we reached our own gate, not a stivver could one of us produce to tip our protector withal. He, still courteous, stalked away without a word, though perhaps not without his opinion of beings so strange as to have neither dignity nor money.

Few of the dinners to which we go can boast quite this setting of romance. One of the first to which I was bidden, indeed, took place on Thanksgiving Day, in such company and amid such surroundings of my own

PERSIAN MINIATURES

country that had it not been for the person who passed the turkey and the cranberry sauce, a stocking-footed individual magnificent in white trousers and a long-tailed brass-buttoned coat which looked as if it might have been cut out of my grandmother's "Cashmere" shawl, I never would have known that some of my fellow diners counted their absence from America not by years but by decades. If they treated me the more kindly because my grandfather, who was one of the first Americans to set foot in Persia, cleared the way for them nearly a hundred years ago, they did not cast me off when they discovered me to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. So do not expect me to make copy out of them—beyond saying that they taught me how friendly and human a missionary may be.

The house to which we go oftenest of all has least in it to remind us where we are. It does, to be sure, remind us of the cousinship between Persia and India, being built on the lines of an Indian bungalow, with wide verandas running the whole length of it in front and behind; and black hats bring in the tea or serve the dinner. But once they are gone the drawing room is a piece of England, down to the very coals on the hearth and the carpet on the floor—in this country whose rugs are in demand the world over! It is a perfect example of the steadfastness with which the Englishman sticks to his own. And we are sure to find there the modern descendant of that famous old British type of the gentleman adventurer, who likes a bit of a lark and the sight of strange suns, who rides, shoots, plays tennis and tent-pegging, and otherwise comports himself in a manner which no Persian—and no German—can understand, any more than they

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

will ever understand how such men have come to inherit so goodly a portion of the earth.

What might cause the German in particular to throw up his hands is the music to be heard there after dinner. Do you sing or play? Never mind: in that hospitable drawing room you have to, just as at Mr. Britling's everybody had to try their hand at hockey. And not many of us can acquit ourselves so creditably as the master of the house, as one of the lady missionaries, or as that visitor from afar who entranced us one night with his *estudiantina* songs of Smyrna, accompanying himself on his lute. But it is gay, it is human, it is homey. And afterward we dance. We dance on that English carpet! And as the society of gentleman adventurers inevitably has a strong masculine tinge, the men can often get no better partners than each other. Nor do we fox-trot and I don't know what. We dance the good old-fashioned waltz—not, mind you, that hybrid two-step in waltz time which in my generation was the thing in America. An occasional concession to America is a true two-step; and I have seen there a hesitating one-step and a perfectly unhesitating Highland Fling. At any rate, we caper, on that magic carpet flown from England to Persia, till unheard of hours in the morning, while black hats peer in from the veranda and ask themselves what extraordinary, if not immoral, things the *Firengis* can be up to.

There is another and more essential savour of our society, to be tasted in the houses of us all. I happen to have seen a few foreign colonies in my day, but Hamadan is another pair of sleeves. For we are neither people of leisure living in Persia for the enrichment of æsthetic souls or the easing of depleted pocket books, nor are we

PERSIAN MINIATURES

hewers of wood and drawers of water for a plutocratic ruling caste. On the contrary, we rather give ourselves the airs of a ruling caste, albeit most of us are merchants or missionaries. These, I take it, are the most populous estates in Persia, though the Service and the Bank take precedence of them at dinner. In Hamadan the Service is very thinly represented by one consul, a Turk, and two bachelor vice consuls, an Englishman and a Russian. Upon the Bank, therefore, falls the social primacy among us, the manager of it being known to all mankind as the *Reis*, the Chief. That other Persian estate, the Telegraph, is foreign to us, since we are off the main line of the Anglo-Indian wire. To make up for it we have the Gendarmerie, the Customs, the Road, and the Alliance—the *Alliance Israëlite Universelle*, of which more anon.

Now you have here the ingredients of a sufficient diversity. And this diversity is further variegated by the number of flags we fly. Among us—I take pains to follow the alphabet!—are Americans, hyphenate Armenians, Belgians, a Bulgarian, Englishmen, Frenchmen, a German or two, Greeks, Russians, a Swede, Swiss, and Turks. What draws out, however, the true flavour of this peacock pie is that no one element is large enough to suffice to itself. So whether I will or no, I, who am in theory an enraged enemy of cosmopolitanism, see every day some such contrast of race or of worldly estate as delights my secret heart better than all else in life. What, for example, can be a more touching example of the lion lying down with the lamb than to behold an elderly missionary from rural America pour a cup of tea for a handsome young Frenchman—very much awake, as they say in

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

his country—or a Russian officer kiss the hand of a Jewess who came to Ecbatana from Babylon by way of the *Quartier Latin*? Yet I notice that our gatherings—and some of them collect almost all of us under one roof—deficient as they incline to be on the distaff side, do not seem to include certain fairer members of our circle. One is a young Frenchwoman, governess in the family of the Turkish consul, whose *mots* are in constant circulation amongst us but not her visiting cards. Can it be that we are snobbish about Mlle. Célestine? I did not have time to find out, for she deserted us in company with a Greek rug man. Then there is the mysterious being who keeps house for the Russian roadmaster, by some reported to be a countess, by others a cook: why do I never meet her at dinner? And I shall always bitterly regret that inopportune flight of a fellow-countrywoman of my own, whose fantastic legend made her out at once a queen of the music hall and consort of a Persian Khan. Venturing hither to inspect his ancestral estates, she became for a moment the bright particular star of our society and the confidante of the missionary ladies. But, alas, she was so cruel as to vanish no more than a few weeks before my arrival.

Gossip, my masters? But characters, too, and situations, and settings, and ready-made plots! Some of them are Jane Austen and Henry James. Others are Kipling or Conrad. A few are Arabian Nights. Not for these chaste pages are they, therefore. And, for the rest, most of them concern people whose bread one has eaten, and so, however they may provoke the itching hand to clap them between covers, must be permitted to walk their romantic ways at large.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

II

Where three people live within thirty-three miles of each other, two of them are sure to form a clique. This is the law of life, and I shall not be foolish enough to cry out against it. I am rather sorry, though, that we see so little of the Russians. My first impulse is to make friends with a Russian. But— Half a dozen buts. Distance is one. None of them happen to live very near us. Language is another. That blessed Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 is a third, by virtue of which Englishmen and Russians in Persia are generally at swords' points—or were, under the old régime. Then mysterious countess-cooks do not fit into the Anglo-Saxon scheme of things. And the vice-consul, who is also official head of the bank: it is remembered of him that he was once porter of the Russian bank in Meshed, in a *muzhik's* smock. And he studies French with Mlle. Célestine. That Mlle. Célestine somehow casts an unfortunate air around the Russian vice-consulate. Nothings, nothings, which added together contrive to make a something.

I, of course, am not frightened by Mlle. Célestine, or by a countess-cook, or even by a banker vice-consul who has been a *muzhik*. On the contrary, they look to me like uncommonly good copy—to use a gross professional term—and I am dying to call on them. But what to do—if I am the guest of the British half of the Agreement of 1907, whose face I cannot blacken? Again nothings, which added together make a something! Nevertheless, accident brought it about not only that I should meet Mlle. Célestine, but that I should dine at the Russian vice-consulate. And O dear how I contrived

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

to blacken my own face, if not that of my entire race! It came about in this wise. The initiated had told me that no matter at what hour you were invited to dine at the Russian vice-consulate, dinner was never served before eleven. Now it happened that on the appointed evening Hamadan produced one of her rarest miracles. It rained. It rained so furiously, and I had so far to walk through swimming and unfamiliar streets, that I thought myself perfectly safe in starting about nine. And I found my host at his dessert. I attempted lame apologies by saying that I had lost my way. My host was good enough to apologise in turn for his promptness, informing me that as it was neither Wednesday nor Saturday he was free of the *courrier de Pétersbourg*. "I have so much to do, my God!" he cried, clapping his hands. "I have so much to do!" He must, poor wretch, what with his vice-consulate and his bank and his French lessons. But he was simple and friendly, as a Russian knows how to be to a stranger, and he kept filling up the glasses around my plate so fast and so indiscriminately, with vodka, beer, champagne, and liqueurs, that I had to be careful what I did with them.

What troubled me most about this accident was that another guest was the new commander of the Persian Cossacks—a grave and handsome officer who quite evidently had never been a *muzbik*. He further upset my calculations by drinking only wine, and next to none of that; and very quizzically did he look at the two of us. At first he had very little to say, saying it in a French which filled me with envy. He told me that his superiors had not quite made up their minds whether to choose Hamadan or Kermanshah for a post of Cossacks. He

PERSIAN MINIATURES

hoped Hamadan, because it is higher and cooler. He was a man of the mountains himself, from Tiflis. And he said his wife was German. I have often thought about them since. In the meantime, he said, he had been looking for a house to live in, and had taken on trial the roomy mansion of a Hamadani with twenty wives—eight of whom, to be sure, lived in other places than Hamadan. It seems there is a highly popular and perfectly lawful institution in this country whereby in addition to the four legal consorts approved by the Koran, a man may have temporary wives to any number!

Among other interesting things the Colonel told us that there had been a good deal of talk in the Russian papers of late about a certain mysterious traveller in Persia, of whom I had already heard. I had heard about him because he owned one of the few automobiles in the country. What I had not heard about him was that, having a French name and a Brazilian passport, he was supposed to be a German and a secret agent. At any rate, he seemed to make most of his journeys in that part of Persia which adjoins the Bagdad trail, and the Russian papers reported that he had been buying land, or lending money to landowners, in the region of Isfahan—presumably to establish “interests” for the Germans against the day when the question of the Persian branch of the Bagdad railway should come up. The Czar and the Kaiser, the Colonel reminded me, had an interview about that matter at Potsdam in 1910. In pursuance of the understanding at which they arrived the Russians were to have according to one account five years, according to another ten, in which to build a line from the north to Khanikin. And if they didn’t do it within the

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

time agreed upon, the coast was to be clear for the Germans.

We afterward saw a good deal of the Colonel and his German wife. She, at least, fitted into the Anglo-Saxon scheme of things! So, more or less, did the wife of the banker vice-consul's assistant. The latter has a French name, too, he speaks excellent English, and they say he is of German extraction. Who knows? In those simple days one didn't pay much attention to such things. He is at all events suave, and more worldly wise than his chief, over whom he seems to exert a subtle authority. Even in those simple days, however, I used to wonder if this was another example of the case of which Mr. Shuster had a taste, whereby under the old régime there was so often a double authority in Russian affairs, the power behind the throne sometimes being stronger than the throne itself. But being myself nothing but a humble noter of the appearances of this world, I took quite as much interest in another member of the Russian colony whom I encountered behind a samovar. I first tried him in English and French, and nothing happened. Then, if you please, he tried me in Turkish. And through that dark medium it came out that he was a Bulgarian, whom a fantastic destiny had landed in a Russian bank in Persia!

Some of the visitors who help to keep life in Hamadan from becoming monotonous are Russians, and not the least amusing. One of them might have been the hero of a famous Russian story. He was a son of papa from Petersburg, who came to inspect the bank. He spent two or three months in our midst, during which time he put his nose into his bank for two half hours. In like manner did he pass a year and a half in Persia, at twenty-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

five roubles a day; but he went home woefully in debt. He was delightful, and an indefatigable bridge player. No less delightful, though rather more responsible as an inspector, was a dazzling young man who came to make reports on Russian commerce. I remember hearing him say one night after dinner that his people had decided not to build that railway to Khanikin. Why should they? It would only favour competition against themselves. If the Germans chose to, let them. As for the English, he had been astounded to find out that their famous oil concession extended right up to the frontier of the Caucasus, where there is plenty of oil as yet untapped. Very clever of them; but very disagreeable for Baku. But those English, luckily, are so unenterprising! They were enterprising enough, though, he added, to have suggested a revision of the Agreement of 1907. He thought it might be a good idea.

All this was said in an English house, with that disconcerting frankness of which a Russian has the secret. I, however, being of an incurable light-mindedness, was even more enchanted by his vignettes of the characters a traveller will encounter. He told us, in his fluent but not perfectly idiomatic English, about a lady who had been unfortunate in husbands. One fell out of a window, another got himself shot in the Caucasus, something else happened to the third. And then she had found it in her to marry an aviator. "But what a carelessness!" he cried. "They perish!"

III

It is a sample of those curious strata of ignorance that darken the mind of man that I could have lived so many

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

years in the same world with the *Alliance Universelle Israëlite*—or is it the *Alliance Israëlite Universelle*?—without hearing anything about it. In Hamadan, however, I heard about it very soon. And I gave myself the pleasure of going with the Sah'b and the Khanum to call on it.

Having done so, I cannot boast that I made the most of my opportunities. All I can say is that the late Baron Hirsch of Vienna had something to do with founding the *Alliance*, that its headquarters are in Paris, that it maintains excellent schools for the Jews in many parts of Asia and Africa, and that it has maintained one in humble Hamadan since 1900. Whence it is that *mirzas* may be picked up here who speak a very fair French. The school is carried on entirely in that language. There are two schools, really, one for girls and one for boys. They stand in the same enclosure in the heart of the city, though in a northwestern quarter of it with which I never became very familiar. The gateway let us into a big trim court, set about with buildings quite the most imposing and the most European-looking in Hamadan. Over the portico of one were emblazoned in Latin letters the names of Baron Hirsch and other philanthropists of his race. And the one where the resident teachers live has more of a Latin than a Persian look, with its long pillared porch.

The director and his wife received us in a drawing room not so different from one of ours, though rather chillier. They are evidently of the Chosen People, longer-nosed, quicker-witted, speaking infinitely better French than we. Monsieur was born in Constantinople, has lived long in Paris, and enjoys more than a bowing acquaintance with Egypt and Algiers. Madame is a

PERSIAN MINIATURES

small, plump, prolific person, disconcertingly cross-eyed, who administers advice and rebuke to her numerous progeny while allowing none of the conversation to escape her. We have the more in common because the Khanum has been good enough to help out the missionary school during an absence of a member of the staff. Some one puts the case upon the plane of humour by saying that the Khanum has become a rival of the ladies of the Alliance. "But no!" objects Monsieur amiably. "You do good and we do good. In good there is no rivalry." He confesses that Persia makes him regret northern Africa a little. Pursuing comparisons, he tells us that in Algiers the French have effaced the Arab, whereas in Egypt one still feels him. The Sah'b, nevertheless, is a little disillusioned to hear that for all that his fellow countrymen are not absolutely adored by the natives of the Nile!

There are four foreign assistants in the school—two young men and two young women. The latter, who hail from Syria, wear sunbonnets and black aprons. They are very gay, very coy, very given to the sidelong glance and to the confidential whisper. Why not, when upon them devolves so much of the responsibility of representing the sex in Hamadan? But there is no shadow of doubt that they could show us all their heels in arithmetic, geography, or any other branch of human science. The young men are more Oriental in appearance, being slight, dark, unfathomably eyed, yet of a vivacity that reminds me of Salonica quay. One of them, who is a native of Tangier, mourns the lost glories of Cairo. Even after Paris, he tells us, Cairo did not disenchant him. As for the other, he sings the praises of Baghdad. At least there is life there, he says. There are carriages in the streets,

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

there are boats on the Tigris, there are—will you believe it?—cinematographs to amuse one at night. Whereas Hamadan, with its movies that do not move, its tea houses that are not cafés, its evening silence as of the grave—— O God!

Nevertheless, they are willing to bury themselves alive in a hole like this. And I had always been simple enough to suppose that missionaries were a Christian invention! Yet I seem to make out that these doers of good might not be regarded as among the most orthodox of Israel. They do not take Esther and Mordecai too seriously, or Tobias and the Angel. Did you know that Hamadan is the scene of a good part of that story, and that Tobias was buried here, too? I did not until I heard it at the *Alliance*. I also seem to make out, though, that our hosts have a sense of and a pride in the antiquity of their race, living here where Jews have lived since the time of Sargon, king of Assyria, where Darius the Great discovered and put into effect the decree of Cyrus with regard to the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, where in the twelfth century the famous traveller Benjamin of Tudela found fifty thousand of his own people. There are not many more than a tenth of that number now, an astounding proportion of whom speak French nearly as well as they do Persian.

But—I don't know—we somehow see very little of these intelligent and amusing members of the *Alliance*. Nothings again that make a something—distance, language, work. Once or twice, though, I was on the edge of telling one of them why we are all a little afraid of them. For when they pay calls they do it in a solid phalanx—Monsieur, Madame, the two young ladies in sunbonnets,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the two dark young gentlemen. And they all shout at the tops of their voices.

IV

The saints and the poets lament or boast of being in the world but not of it. I, being neither poet nor saint, find that Hamadan gives me the same sensation. And I know not whether to lament or to boast. In the meantime I speculate, admiring how East is East and West is West and how seldom the twain do meet. In theory I regret it. In practise I incline on the whole to approve that instinct which makes us distrust or even dislike a "foreigner." A man, generally, must be one thing or another; and the more clearly he is one thing or the other, the more does he usually amount to in this unintelligible world. A Richard Burton, a Lafcadio Hearn, an Arminius Vambéry, can contrive to be one thing and another; but most of us degenerate into nothing better than spies or tramps if we attempt it. Or in the end we get swallowed up by what we too intimately explore. So I believe that there is something human and natural, something not altogether shameful, at the root of such delicate matters as antisemitism, say, or the relations between Japan and America. I do not dislike a man because he is a Jew or a Japanese. I like or dislike Jews and Japanese on the same grounds that I like or dislike other people; and so, I fancy, is it with nearly everybody else. But not many people feel their hearts drawn out toward men who look too different from themselves, or have too different manners, or are steeped in too different associations. That is all there is, really, to antisemitism or to the question of the Japanese in California. Why should

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

we not recognise so simple a fact? It operates on both sides of any given case—and on both sides of many more cases than I have named. Nor is it incompatible with excellent relations between countries. The truth of the matter is that two races, like two persons, appreciate each other best from a distance! It is not a thing to wrangle about. It is of the essence of all human ties. Piracy and purse-cutting are of course intolerable; but it is just as intolerable to find our neighbours perpetually sitting in our own chairs. This is the perfectly honest instinct which has formed so many personalities and civilisations and brought them to a flower of their own. A world motley enough for the flags which now fly in it is a richer world than any dreamed of by the flag-melters. For my part, at any rate, nothing terrifies me so much as the possibility that mankind may be run into one mould, and that on all the six continents we shall one day eat and wear and read the same things. And from the papers I have seen since August 1, 1914, I gather that a similar terror burns in worthier bosoms.

Nevertheless, being myself of those whose tendency it is to degenerate into tramps or spies, I am rather sorry we meet so few Persians! Yet what we do see of them is perhaps all the more interesting to a stranger newly come into a strange land. That Khan, for instance, whom we passed in the street one snowy moonlight night—what a picture he made of customs different from our own! We, of course, were hurrying home unattended, like pickpockets. And he? In front of him went a *mirza* in an *aba*, or so he seemed to be by his cap. Next stalked the Khan, in a European overcoat, very slowly, as befits one who is no slave of time. On either side

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of him walked a servant swinging an enormous lantern of white linen—the size of the lanterns testifying to the consequence of the Khan. There followed another *mirza* in another *aba*. And last of all marched a couple of bravoes with rifles on their shoulders—or matchlocks, most likely.

Another detail of social procedure in Persia is that a call can never be in the nature of a surprise. Notice must be sent beforehand and an appointment duly made. No chance there for a hostess to be out—or for a caller to empty a cardcase in an afternoon. Your Persian is not so destitute of manners as to rush away after fifteen or thirty minutes, as if unable to sit still another instant. An hour is none too long for a formal call, while two hours, or four, or six, are not uncommon between acquaintances of some standing. We have less experience of these visitations than the missionaries, who follow the local custom of calling on their friends, Persian, Hebrew, or Armenian, on the local holidays. And their friends acknowledge this courtesy by calling on the missionaries on Christmas Day. At least this had always been the case until the Christmas I was in Hamadan. Then, after consultation among ourselves, the notice was sent out that callers would be received instead on New Year's Day—which corresponds more exactly to the Persian custom. But certain old stagers were so offended by this lapse of precedent that they refused to call at all. Yet even so, one of our missionary friends told us that she received over three hundred New Year visitors.

Rather to their surprise, the Sah'b and the Khanum came in for a share of this attention. I suspect the new house may have had something to do with it. Any Hamadani who had seen the outside of that extraordinary

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

structure was consumed by a desire to inspect the inside. At any rate, they began ringing the bell, or knocking at the gate, by half-past nine in the morning. As they were of both sexes, they of course had to be received in different parts of the house. And as the Sah'b happened to be out, I was finally sent for in despair to go downstairs and confront twenty-one *kolas*, not one of which I had ever before set eyes on and to not one of which did I suppose I would be able to say boo. I therefore shook twenty-one hands, made twenty-one bows, and whispered the same mystic number to Habib. It then transpired that several among the owners of the *kolas* spoke English as well as I, while several more—thanks to that blessed Alliance—spoke French. But most of them contented themselves with examining furtively the chairs on which they sat in none too much ease, and the various other strange objects about them. In the meantime the house-boys passed innumerable cups of tea, serving them on their knees. This exaggeration of courtesy, I imagine, must be a tradition of houses where everybody sits on the floor. As luck would have it, Mehm'd Ali had baked a couple of his famous cakes, which helped to fill in the gaps between my spasmodic attempts to make small talk in strange tongues with twenty-one unknown beings. And we were also fortunate enough to have on hand a quantity of *shirini*—small, hard Persian candies which make up in colour what they lack in taste.

The twenty-one were nearer forty-two by the time the Sah'b returned to my aid. A little later a batch of ninety youths appeared in a body—to pay their respects to the Sah'b as a patron of the American boys' school! Not many of them spoke any perceptible English; for the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

missionaries, unlike their colleagues of the Alliance, make it a point to carry on their affairs in the language of the country. What surprised me more was to have one of the ninety pointed out to me as an Englishman. Yet he knew English no better than the rest, being attired, furthermore, in the short black *kola* and long pleated coat of a Persian Khan. I could hardly wait to hear the explanation of these mysteries, which after all was simple enough. He was merely an example, that English boy in a Persian *kola*, of what happens when East meets West. His father, although born in England, had desired like me to know more of Persia. He had therefore turned Mohammedan and married a Persian, with a jewel in her nose—from whom the son takes his costume, his language, his looks. And his mind? And his future? The mother's, too, no doubt. But—life——!

The Khanum in the meantime was having experiences of her own. Her visitors, as was proper, entered by the back door and were received in the dining room, from which the chairs had been removed to our part of the house. That, of course, made no difference to the ladies, who would not have known what to do with them. They sat on the floor, where young Abbas and the cook's infantile apprentice handed them their share of what the older boys were serving the men. If they objected to our impurity, they bravely swallowed their scruples with their tea, and perhaps went to the bath afterward. As for us, I know we aired the house for a good hour! But I must add that most of our callers were of the humbler sort. The Khanum told us she had answered innumerable questions with regard to her *état civil*. All the ladies wanted to know how old she was, how long she had been

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

married, how many children she had, etc., etc. They were scandalised to hear that her parents had not found a husband for her till she was twenty. It is by no means unheard of, you know, for a Persian bride to be nine years old, while an unmarried girl of fifteen or sixteen is no better than an old maid. They found it unfortunate, too, that the Khanum had married late in the year as well as late in life. For a wedding should take place in the spring. Otherwise children will be long in coming, or will never come at all. And that, for a Persian woman, is the disaster of disasters.

My own regret at having been cut off from half of so interesting a social event was tempered for me by an accident which later befell me in a missionary house. I chanced to open the door upon a gathering of ladies, who were Armenians and who therefore countenanced my ill-timed intrusion. They all wore black lace scarves over their hair, which gave them rather a Spanish look; but what reminded me more of the Jewesses of Salonica was a certain outstanding black fillet bound about their brows. The greatest lady of them all, a banker's wife, dazzled me by the stupendous emerald she bore in the middle of her fillet, like an elderly Lucrezia Crivelli. Now it happens that I am consumed by an unappeasable passion for emeralds. The person in history whom I most envy is Abdaz, daughter of the tenth century Caliph Al Muizz of Cairo, who left at her death no less than five bushels of those most secret of gems. I could not keep my eyes off that astounding old lady. She reciprocated my interest to the degree of trying to talk to me. Her efforts were not very successful until it transpired that she came from Azerbaijan and spoke the Turkish dia-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

lect of that province. Half of this is Persian, to be sure, and the rest is gargling. Nevertheless I, knowing a little of the Turkish of Stambul, was able to carry on a broken conversation with the happy proprietor of so magnificent a jewel. She inquired without forms how old I was, where my father lived, why I had left him, what I did for a living, how much money I made at it, and what steps I had taken against race-suicide. And her umbrage at hearing that I had taken none was nothing to her outcries over my admission that although quite old enough to know better I had found no more respectable business than writing stories—and not godly ones. In short, she showed me my place, did the lady of the emerald. But if we had not been encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses I would have blurted out to that frank old Lucrezia Crivelli that I was ready to reform and run away with her—and her emerald.

It was permitted me, at last, to enter more than one true Persian house. But no true Persian house I entered seemed to offer me quite so concentrated a flavour of Oriental hospitality as the one occupied by the Turkish consul. This was partly, of course, because I have more in common with a Turk than with a Persian, and because the speech of this Turk was music to my ears after the accent, say, of the old lady of the emerald. But a reception of this more honey-tongued old gentleman, given long after I first met him, left in my memory quite the most admirable among several pictures of society in Hamadan. Two slouchy local policemen stood guard at the gate. Inside we were met by a fair-haired Turkish soldier in a fez, looking very trim and European in comparison, who escorted us through the garden to the tent

OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

where His Excellency—as he did not mind being called—received his guests. The tent was really two tents, the inner one being a square red canopy without flaps, the outer one having flaps of embroidery in panels, and hanging rugs and Persian prints for further decoration. In front, however, the flaps were reefed up, so as to give us the view of the garden. And not the least ornamental part of this setting was a long table in front of the tent, on which stood symmetrically spaced pyramids of grapes, cherries, apricots, and—cucumbers. For in Persia a cucumber is regarded as a fruit, and as one of the most delicate.

The first thing was to shake His Excellency's hand and to devise for His Excellency's ear remarks as gracious as may flow from an ill-trained Anglo-Saxon tongue. The next thing was to go the round, not too perfunctorily, of a large company of fezzed, turbaned, kolaed, and hatted sitters about His Excellency. That done chairs were produced. These conveniences, in fact, were the one false note of the occasion. We were then served with tea and with a most comforting ice of the morello cherry. By this time there was so little snow left on Elvend that the essential ingredient of that ice, I suppose, must have come from the graveyard of the gallows! We were likewise invited to deface the beautiful pyramids on the table, but nobody had the courage to do so. Nobody said anything, either, unless a newcomer joined the company under the tent. The most imposing person whose arrival we witnessed was the prince commandant of the gendarmerie—a tall, slim, soldierly looking Persian who exchanged with His Excellency salutes more magnificent than you can conceive. There followed, however, the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

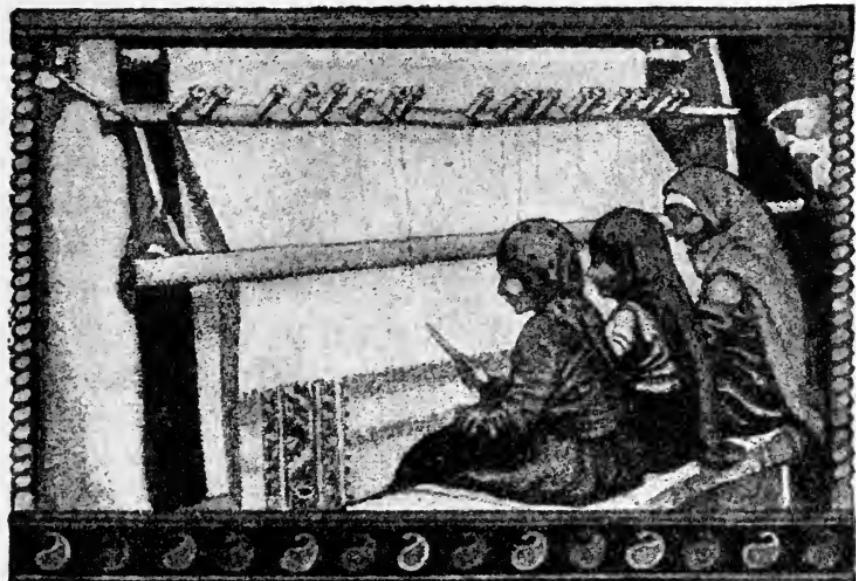
most elegant young man in the world. He wore white duck trousers, a black broadcloth coat, yellow shoes, a Panama hat turned up in front, a glistening black moustache, and a gold-headed cane. And when I saw that he carried in his other hand a red red rose, he reminded me so irresistibly of the gentleman in "Patience"—is it?—with his affection *à la* Plato for a bashful young potato or a not *too* French French bean, that I nearly burst out before all the fezzes and turbans and *kolas* and hats with:

"If he's content with a vegetable love, which would certainly not suit *me*,

Why, what a most particularly pure young man this pure young man must be!"

But that no doubt was jealousy. And they told me that he was also a clever young man, having been born in Judæa, educated in Paris, and chosen as head of the Behai school in Hamadan, before he came to the Turkish consul's reception.

How long we sat, heaven knows. We tried to be as polite as possible. At any rate, we were late to lunch.



XI

THE FACTORY

To grapple effectually with even purely material problems requires more serenity of mind and more lofty courage than people generally imagine.

Joseph Conrad: AN OUTPOST OF PROGRESS

IT IS an object of vast curiosity in Hamadan—to the greatest number of eyes, no doubt, because of the windmill that pokes its bald American head above the wall. That is a story, too: the Odyssey of that windmill by train, ship, and camel, from young Chicago to New York, Port Said, Basra, Baghdad, Kermanshah, and old Ecbatana, where an exiled French chauffeur set it a-spinning in the Persian air. People come from miles around to admire that

PERSIAN MINIATURES

handiwork of the *Firengi*, which pumps up the unwilling water of the East for the dyeing of rugs to be laid on Western floors. After that far-flown bird had wagged its tail for some months in the gusts of Elvend, it was thought advisable to deepen the well out of which the water a little too unwillingly rose. Well-diggers were accordingly called, their craft being a common one in this country of hidden streams. And there came a day when one well-digger, in a fit of spite, kicked another well-digger into the seventy-foot shaft. If you will believe it, nothing untoward happened to him who tumbled seventy feet. But he who did the kicking was taken by the police and bastinadoed on his too impulsive soles.

As for me—so doth the world move by contraries!—almost anything else in the factory compound interests me more than the windmill. The well-diggers, for instance, through whose dusty rags I first learned that khaki is a pure Persian word, meaning earth-coloured. Shall I be pedantic enough to add that the *h* is there for a reason, and that the Persians accent the last syllable? The piling up of mud pies into the new dye house-chimney interests me, too, to say nothing of the beautiful groined vaulting of that house, in light brick. A Persian can do anything with earth, water, and his ten fingers, so sure in him is the inheritance of those who first devised the secret of the dome. The old dye house is also something to see, where huge copper kettles bubble over fires of poplar and *tapeh*. Nor are the dyes aniline that bubble in those kettles. They are alizarin, if you must know, against which no man can complain that they run or fade. If there be room for complaint, it is that the colours concocted by the ingenious *Firengi* out of coaltar and heaven

THE FACTORY

knows what are not always the same as the colours which the Persians of the old time extracted from the herbs and barks of their own valleys. Many of them, that is, are not simple colours, such as the Orientals instinctively know how to put together, but complicated colours, veiled colours, shadows and ashes of colours, subtly calculated to soothe the neurasthenic souls of the West. But these are matters of which I am not competent to speak. I can only tell how the dripping hanks of wool are carried away to dry in a sun without veil or shadow. Then they are piled in a storehouse according to their kinds—in the care of an Armenian *mirza* who has been to America, and who has brought back a hat and a twang.

What interests me most, however, is the long low mud building where the wool goes last, to be snipped up and artfully knotted into patterns. The room where those patterns are plotted out is at the lighter and more public end of the house. Here black-capped *mirzas* sit around a long table, busy over water-colours and sheets of squared paper and samples of dyed wool and pieces wickedly cut out of old rugs. The head of the designing room is a man of forty, perhaps, with a singular face, both dark and pale, distinguished and ravaged. He smokes a *miskal* of opium a day. But he can take one look at a carpet and reproduce it for you in water colour, with all the brightness and delicacy of the old miniatures. In fact, he paints miniatures himself, after that charming old Persian tradition which is not yet dead, mounting them on mats of cunningly contrasted colours, spattered with gold. So I am the more willing to take Mr. F. R. Martin's word for it that Behzad and the other miniaturists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may have designed

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the magnificent carpets of the early Safevi period. The other *mirzas* are younger, some of them no more than twelve or fifteen. The big *mirzas* paint entire designs, in the exact colours which the weavers are to use—such designs as Persians have always painted, save when some *Firengi* desolates them by ordering a vast carpet which is nothing but a border around a central desert of pink or blue, empty and flowerless as a billiard board. The little *mirzas* paint the actual working patterns, copying enlarged sections of the design on paper of which each square stands for a knot or a fixed number of knots. They all have lean, dark, intelligent-looking faces, and such thin, long, intelligent-looking fingers. After seeing the hands which so many Persians have I can understand how it is that so many beautiful things have come out of Persia, and how neither time nor misfortune has been able quite to do away with the tradition of them.

The greater part of the building is the factory proper. They tell me that it is the first establishment of its kind in Persia. People have always made rugs there, of course, but they have not always made them outside of their own homes; and least of all have women been accustomed to do so strange a thing. The thing was so strange, for a *Firengi* to think of building a great house and hiring women to weave for him, and Persians are so sensitive about their women, that the affair had to be gone about very diplomatically. The *Sheikh ul Islam*, who is the chief religious functionary of a Persian town, had first to be approached with all possible deference and ceremony. He then had to call together his associates in the cult, and deliberate whether there were anything in law or divinity to forbid the proposed innovation. It was at

THE FACTORY

last decided that the ladies of Hamadan might work for the *Firengi* without losing their reputations, in case the *Firengi* took due steps to insure their privacy. To this end all communication between the wool room and the room of the looms was limited to a hole in the wall, rather like a post-office slot. Furthermore, since the master weaver was a man, and since it was necessary for the *Firengi* or his deputies occasionally to make inspections, a chaperon was appointed from among the elders of Hamadan. This chaperon is a man of God, of canonical age, who receives a stipend from the *Firengi* and whose duty it is to circulate among the looms for the maintenance of decorum and good manners and for the safeguarding of the honour of the husbands of Hamadan. For the greater peace of mind of the latter it is known that the master weaver is also a man of God, wearing the green turban of the seed of the Prophet and being addressed as Sheikh. He, as it happens, is no Hamadani, but from Tabriz. For you may be surprised to learn that Hamadan is not a city of weavers. It may once have been; but if it becomes so again, thanks will be due to the *Firengi*.

I am happy to report that under these conditions no scandal has arisen to trouble the relations of East and West. There was, to be sure, the affair of a certain Mrs. Potiphar, who complained that an Armenian or Jewish *mirza* had insulted her while handing out wool through the hole in the wall. This news caused an immediate exodus from the factory, and the Governor felt it necessary to make an investigation. The insult, however, was evidently too deep for words. While Mrs. Potiphar was unable to utter it, she did specify the day and the hour on

PERSIAN MINIATURES

which it passed through the slit of the wool room, as well as the name of the offending *mirza*. That, somehow or other, she knew! But, as it happened, Joseph was able to prove so good an alibi that the charge fell to the ground and the disquieted husbands allowed their wives to return.

Having been duly advised of these matters, I, as a friend of the manager, was permitted by the white-turbaned chaperon to visit the sacred precinct of the looms. I found there no whirring belts or clattering mechanisms of steel, as certain pessimistic writers on rugs had half led me to expect. In this factory, as in all others of its kind in Persia, there are no other belts than those encircling Persian waists, and only such motor power as works most efficiently on tea and pilau. There are, to be sure, rows of imposing looking appliances, of which the most imposing are the pairs of big poplar posts that contain the warp of a loom. The threads of this warp hang perpendicularly from a fixed transverse beam at the top to a movable transverse beam at the bottom, on which the rug is wound up as it grows in length. There is also a smaller transverse stick, running in and out between the threads and separating them enough for the insertion of a hand shuttle which carries the thread of the woof between each row of knots. Add to this a pair of shears for cutting wool and a sort of heavy, iron-handled comb for beating down the knots and the cross threads, and you have all that is mechanical in the making of a rug. There remains only the narrow wooden platform on which the weavers squat and which if they like can climb the uprights, by means of pegs, as their work grows up the loom.

THE FACTORY

The rest is a matter of clever Persian fingers. And how fast they can fly! They are all plentifully reddened with henna, I notice. So are the bare feet tucked up on the little platforms—the gay green slippers appertaining thereto, those humming-bird slippers I saw in the Bazaar, being neatly set out in rows on the mud floor below. The number of weavers varies, of course, according to the size of the rug, but each one has about a yard and a half to attend to. Every loom is in charge of an *ustad*, a fore-woman, who has the design in hand. She ties the boundary knots, telling her crew how many knots of such and such a colour to add. She is more than likely to have a baby crowing—on occasion read bawling—on the platform beside her, or on the mud floor among the slippers. Many of the weavers are no more than babies themselves, for that matter. I remember one pickaninny of eight or nine who giggled as the manager went by and pointed out a yellow chicken she had put into the blue border of a great carpet, between two stately flowerpots of flowers. The *ustad* was for making her ravel it out; but the wise manager let it stay. Such irregularities are one of the charms of an Oriental rug—all too rare when measurements are taken and wool dyed evenly as it is here. And a pickaninny capable of inventing a chicken has weaving in her blood, even if Hamadan is not a city of weavers. These ladies seemed not too greatly distressed at the approach of persons of the designing sex. There would be a great twitching up over the head of those loose white or coloured sheets which are the less formal shield of virtue, but there would also be craned necks and visions of a high olive cheek-bone or of a blistering black eye. And from the chatter shrilling between loom and loom it was evident that no one

PERSIAN MINIATURES

stood in too great awe of the turbaned censor of morals.

The sex is always temperamental, but in this factory the unhappy manager is often put beside himself with the whims of the daughters of Iran. It is a very human trait, in all parts of the world, to take the line that the company is rich and can afford to stretch a point. Therefore no weaver ever takes the trouble to save wool, which is the most serious item of rug making. The different colours naturally have to be dyed in different hanks. To make a knot of a required colour a bit is cut off; when the knot is tied the two ends are cut again; and when the rug leaves the loom the rough surface has to be clipped smooth by an experienced hand. All this wastes a good deal of wool, which is practically useless because it is already dyed and too short to use again. But can you induce the women to cut off no more than they need to tie their knot? Never! Nor could the manager persuade them to use a pair of clippers he invented, to cut the knots of uniform length. The weavers have, too, a great way of borrowing wool from each other, and of not being too careful to get the colour they need, in order to save a journey to the hole in the wall. They have also been known to borrow wool from the factory and not to return it, carrying it off under their loose clothes when they go home at night. There consequently came a day when the decree went forth that each loom was to be provided with a box, containing wool enough for the carpet in hand, of which the *ustad* was to keep the key and to be allowed to take home the excess or compelled to make up any deficiency. This caused a terrible upheaval, being not only a reflection on a lady's honour but a reason to make her suspect that the factory

THE FACTORY

intended to cheat her of her due amount of wool. At the end of that day some one wailed: "Whoever comes tomorrow will have a bad name!" On the morrow, accordingly, out of three hundred women, twenty came to work. And it took both time and argument to convince them that the manager really knew how much wool went into a carpet of a given size and would see that they got enough.

What is less comprehensible is that they will not take care of the carpet they are weaving. The new mud roof of the factory leaked villainously, as a new mud roof will. The weavers regarded it as so much a matter of course that they would not take the trouble to report the presence of a pool under a loom or of the mildew which would gather on the rug above it. The consequence was that certain carpets were almost ruined before they were finished. Great pieces had to be cut out and knotted in again. I don't know whether the *ustad* foresaw more labour and therefore more pay for herself. The working of the feminine mind is past finding out.

Another time a long slash was discovered in the middle of a carpet that had been months on the loom. The manager at once caused it to be announced that no one would be paid until he found out who had cut that carpet. At first nobody believed him; but when the painful fact became plain that he meant what he said, information was taken him that a certain Mrs. Angel had done the wicked deed, a certain Mrs. Parrot having been witness thereof. On interrogation, both Mrs. Angel and Mrs. Parrot denied knowledge of any carpet cutting. Tears and outcries followed, and loud general demands for pay withheld. The manager stood firm, however—until Mrs. Angel

PERSIAN MINIATURES

went so far as to admit that she had incited Mrs. Parrot to slash the carpet. Mrs. Parrot indignantly repudiated the insinuation. More tears and more lamentations! And at last the force of public opinion compelled Mrs. Angel to confess herself the culprit. Having a grudge against Mrs. Parrot, she had thought to settle it by defacing the latter's carpet. "But what can the *Firengi* do to me?" she boastfully demanded of her companions. What the *Firengi* did to her was to dock her of ten *tomans* of her pay. He then called in the elderly chaperon, who gave her a wigging of the first class and applied twenty-five stripes to her peccant hands, she sobbing out at each blow: "I was at fault!" If the *Firengi* had wielded the switch, there might have been a massacre in Hamadan. As it was, Mr. Angel saw to it that Mrs. Angel worked out her ten *tomans*. And after that there was no more carpet slashing.

Wherein the weavers most fill the heart of the *Firengi* with despair is their capriciousness about turning up at the factory. He has room for seven hundred of them, but he is happy if he can find half that number at the looms on any given day. Not angels, powers, or principalities, not even the censor of morals, can induce them to work six days a week, rest on Friday, and then come back for six days more. A religious anniversary falls due, a visitor comes to call, they are invited to a picnic, or a husband pinches their cheek, and they stay at home—while their carpet hangs idle on the loom and dealers in *Firengistan* telegraph angrily about delays in filling contracts. They like money as much as any one; but a *toman* in hand is worth ten in the cashier's safe. Threats, bonuses, the most glittering picture of the advantageous position

THE FACTORY

of the capitalist, are nothing to them. It is, of course, a thing to turn the hair gray. But do you know? In my secret heart I fear I am on the side of the weavers.

One day the compound was all agog, for His Highness the Governor came to inspect the factory. He deigned to admire the dye house, the store house, the designing room, the wool room, Mrs. Potiphar's slit in the wall, Mrs. Angel's loom, everything. Most of all, I think, he admired the windmill from Chicago. And just as he was going away an old forewoman burst out in front of him.

"The *Firengi*—what God does will!—gives us bread," she cried out inconveniently. "What are you going to do for us? Will you make it cheaper?"

What he did for them, poor wretch, was to fly for his life.

XII

THE SATRAP

*Noble and mild this Persian seems to be,
If outward habit judge the inward man.*

Christopher Marlowe: THE TRAGEDY OF TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT

THE Governor's palace is outwardly indistinguishable as such. One entrance of it, to be sure, opens on a small square, which is generally full of drying towels from a public bath. The entrance we made for was at the bottom of a blind alley, whence an inner lane bounded by high mud walls led to a second gateway. Here lounged a company of rather slouchy-looking individuals who regarded us with some uncertainty. For although we had conformed to the etiquette of the country in making an appointment for our audience, we had been simple enough to think, being three men sound of wind and limb, that we needed no protecting retinue at our heels. However, we indisputably wore hats, which proved us to be persons of a certain degree of consequence. Accordingly a gentleman in a dirty red coat, carrying a silver-headed mace, wished us peace and led us into a courtyard with a big oblong pool in the centre of it, up a steep flight of stone steps at the farther end of the court, through a high *talar*, and to the door of an anteroom. More slouchy-looking persons lounged about it, having rather the aspect of masters

THE SATRAP

of the pen than of the sword. In their hands Silverstick abandoned us, to be divested of our hats, coats, and galoshes—most indispensable article of attire in Persia, where everybody takes off his shoes before going into the house. We were then passed by a sentry with a fixed bayonet over his shoulder into a second anteroom. More loungers—some *mirzas*, some interviewing them on affairs of state. One of the *mirzas* knocked softly at an inner door, and we were admitted into the presence of the Satrap himself.

East and West were curiously mingled in the sanctum of His Highness. The L-shaped room was carpeted with big rugs, the white walls of it were broken by niches succeeding each other at regular intervals, the windows that looked out on the court and the big pool were multitudinously glazed with those little Persian panes. Above them were smaller windows of stained glass whose larger square panes stood on their corners, diamondwise. The Satrap, however, while younger than a Satrap should be and dressed in a tight Persian coat with official brass buttons, sat not on the floor but on a chair, behind nothing less exotic than a desk of new Persia. Old Persia sat beside him, albeit on another chair, in the person of a *Seid*, a descendant of the Prophet, with a round gray beard and a green turban. But this benevolent personage did not disdain to follow the example of His Highness and shake our polluting hands.

What struck me most was His Highness's excellent English. I knew he was not a very distant cousin of the Shah and a member of the same Kajar tribe that seized the throne of Persia after the death of Nadir Shah, in the period of our own revolution. I did not know until he

PERSIAN MINIATURES

told us so that this Perso-Turkoman prince had been educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. And there, among other sciences, he acquired that of football! But he was highly amused by the Sah'b's suggestion that he take part in the matches got up by the Englishmen of Hamadan. He said he might think about it if the games were played behind a wall instead of in an open field. That the *Reis* himself, manager of the Bank and regarded by the Persians as the official chief of our colony, could so far forget his dignity as to muddy himself in these ignoble scrimmages, was no doubt an inexplicable mystery to the black hats who used to crowd the side lines.

On His Highness's table my wandering eye was not slow to detect a copy of the London *Times*. Shall I confess that I was rude enough to wonder if, by any chance, it might be our own—which had failed to arrive by the last post? All our telegrams, at any rate, pass under His Highness's eye before reaching their destination. Letters are rather too numerous and too strangely written. Besides, as they come from Baku and travel up country over the Russian road, the Russians might have something to say about that. But it is a perpetual mystery what becomes of so many copies of the *Times*, to say nothing of so many more copies of the *Graphic* and other illustrated papers. And whenever they fail to turn up we somehow think of the Governor—though we do not forget, either, that the Postmaster has a fair knowledge of the Roman alphabet.

As the old gentleman in the green turban lacked the Satrap's gift of tongues, His Highness was perfectly safe in confiding to us that he detested Hamadan, finding it the worst city in Persia. He suspected me of trying to pro-

THE SATRAP

duce some belated good manners when I told him that I liked Hamadan very much, and that one of the things I liked most about it was the lack of trams and carriages. He answered that he had hopes of widening and paving certain of the principal streets—and he has since done so, I hear to my regret. In the meantime he announced to us one innovation he had in mind, namely an edict to the effect that every citizen should thereafter hang a lantern outside his house at night. But we later had occasion to notice that the Hamadanis were not too prompt in responding to this recommendation. Indeed I blush to add that our own lane might have been full of thieves, wolves, and every manner of obscure deed, for all we did to illuminate its darkness.

Harrow and Sandhurst may be partly responsible for these enlightened notions. I fancy, though, that the illustrious example of His Highness's Papa entered into the matter. This powerful personage is himself a Satrap, and a greater one, who not only has widened the streets of his own capital and embellished them with public buildings, but who maintains one of the best brass bands in Asia, capable of executing Bizet, Sousa, or even Irving Berlin for all I know. I never had the pleasure of listening to it. I have, however, had the pleasure of hearing many stories about this musically inclined old gentleman, who is warden of the Mesopotamian marches. I never took in before I went there that Persia is propped up so high above the rest of the world, or that part of the world which lies to the west of it. To climb into this country of the sky is never a simple matter, as they know best who have travelled from the Persian Gulf to Shiraz. On the west there are only two places where the thing can be done with any ease.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

One of them is in the north, near Lake Urumia, where the old caravan trail went from Trebizond to Tabriz. The other is the older and steeper caravan trail which threads the passes of the Zagros range between Baghdad, or Khani-kin, and Kermanshah. The trans-Caucasian railway has taken away the glory of the Trebizond-Tabriz route, about which Xenophon knew something, and which Marco Polo travelled in his day. But the Baghdad-Kermanshah route is still the one—or was before the war—by which English and Indian cottons and teas, after sailing up the Tigris to Baghdad, tranship themselves to camel back and climb the ladders of Persia. Now those passes are not only the borderland between Mesopotamia and Persia, but they are also the borderland between two of the most redoubtable tribes in Persia, the Kurds and the Lurs. These good people have a habit of pouncing down on caravans, as they wend their toilsome way through the stony defiles, and of either pillaging them to the quick or extorting from them a ransom of so much a camel. The current rate before the war ran from six to twelve *krans* an animal. It is whispered, however, that the musical warden of the marches is not altogether a stranger to these operations, and that he is capable of taking from the tribesmen his fifty to ninety per cent. of the proceeds of their enterprise.

Picturesque as these operations are, they are looked at somewhat coldly by the English, whose Persian trade in the four years before the war fell off \$1,000,000—notwithstanding the fact that they are said to pay Satrap Senior 30,000 *tomans* a year to keep the passes open. On the other hand, the Russians are said to pay him 60,000 *tomans* a year to keep the passes closed! When things get

THE SATRAP

too difficult for him he resigns. And then no one gets through the passes at all, for love or money. He is thereupon reappointed, as he was for the eighth time while I was in Hamadan. During the same year the English paid the Lurs a matter of £400 to let alone a party of engineers who wanted to survey a possible route for a railway between the Karun, the only navigable river in Persia, and a town in the region of Kermanshah called Khorremabad. Whereupon some one else paid the Lurs more to keep the surveyors out. At any rate, they broke their agreement with the English. Another highly interesting example of the working, under the old régime, of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907—and perhaps of the Potsdam Agreement of 1910.

I do not pretend to know whether these things be true. I am merely quoting current gossip—which further reports that Satrap Senior is an exceedingly well-to-do and exceedingly thrifty old gentleman. He maintains, nevertheless, as becomes a prince of the blood and a warden of marches, a standing army of his own. And whenever he takes the field with his army at his heels it is miraculous how quickly the passes open—not to mention how generous the mountain chiefs become of their flocks and herds. As for Satrap Junior, he suffers under the double disadvantage of being a much younger man than the Kara-Gozlu grandees of Hamadan and of having no profitable passes under his jurisdiction. At any rate, the Russians have kindly relieved him of the responsibilities of Sultan Bulagh. He complained bitterly to us that he had a budget of only 500 *tomans* a month, out of which he could not possibly defray his personal expenses, let alone beautifying the town. It was not he, however, who told us the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

tale of his bodyguard of twenty horsemen. Emulous no doubt of his celebrated parent, he sent in to the *Reis-i-Malieb*, the local representative of the Treasury Department, a bill for the pay and upkeep of fifty cavaliers. The *Reis-i-Malieb*, who is one of Mr. Shuster's old lieutenants and an honest man, asked first to see a review of the troop. The troop was accordingly reviewed, and among its members the *Reis-i-Malieb* and his friends recognised various rowdies and idlers of the Bazaar. These, being privately questioned, replied without any hesitation that they had been offered five *krans* apiece to appear on that place and day, mounted, in order to swell the Satrap's train. The *Reis-i-Malieb* therefore refused to honour the requisition of His Highness—who thought best not to press his claim. So who shall say that Mr. Shuster went to Persia in vain!

As my two companions were interested in rugs, the conversation turned to that topic. The Satrap professed a desire to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father, who had so forwarded the manufacture of rugs in Kerman-shah. He added that the weavers there are not women but men and boys, who instead of working from a painted pattern follow instructions that are sung to them by a foreman, in some old technical language which is no longer understood outside the profession. At this the Sah'b and his friend looked so flabbergasted that I rushed in where they feared to tread and asked His Highness if he collected rugs. My question diverted him as much as if I had asked the Mayor of Brockton if he collected boots. For I had yet to learn that rugs are as much a matter of course in Persia as *kolas*. Everybody has them, from the richest to the poorest, and nobody sentimentalises over them. And I also had yet to learn why the Sah'b looked

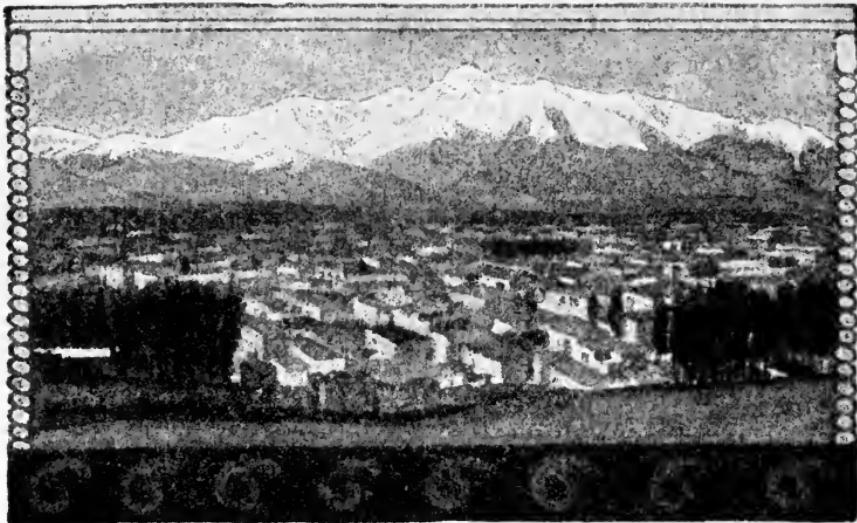
THE SATRAP

so flabbergasted when His Highness spoke of the rugs of Kermanshah. But that you shall not learn till the next chapter.

In the meantime we were served two rounds of tea, in European cups, but without the European horror of cream. Those cups, I suppose, were instituted for the peace of mind of the old *Seid*, who drank his tea out of a glass in the proper way, distracted by no doubt as to whether his second glass had been defiled by Christian lips. Then we took leave, without asking permission to do so in the ceremonious Persian way—and without being assured, in consequence, that His Highness's house had been purified by our presence, his ills forgotten, or his fortune increased.

There followed an awful moment in the anteroom, when after being inducted into our hats, coats, and galoshes, we discovered that we could scrape up between us no more than seventeen *krans* for tips. These, nevertheless, we bestowed upon the attendant underlings with an air of immense generosity. But the worst was that we had nothing left for Silverstick, who stalked majestically in front of us, clearing a way with his mace through a crowd of moss-troopers at the gate and escorting us as far as the square. His expression, on parting from *Firengis* who were too poor to be accompanied by so much as one servant or to find in their pockets so much as one *kran* for the Governor's gate-keeper, was something to remember.

As for the Satrap, he never returned our call. He no doubt heard the report of Silverstick, and took the Sah'b for one of his own clerks.



XIII

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

(BUT TO BE SKIPPED BY THOSE WHO NEITHER READ NOR WRITE THEM.)

A judge at common law may be an ordinary man; a good judge of a carpet must be a genius.

Edgar Allan Poe: PHILOSOPHY OF FURNITURE

I

WHENEVER we are hard up for amusement—as may happen even in royal Ecbatana, since Alexander went away—we turn over our rug books. Of these we have quite a collection. For the Sah'b is himself a man of rugs; and when a new book about them appears, as is sure to happen once a twelve-month, the good people at home send him out a copy. I don't think he ever bought one on his own account—in English. But they

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

help to console him for the fact that only one copy in three of *Life* or *Punch* reaches us. What can we do? Our destiny has given us to know from our youth up a quantity of simple matters which to this day remain dark to most writers of rug books. And man must laugh. At any rate, I must confess that we find it impossible to take these volumes very seriously: not even the fattest and most expensive of them, whose authors' names are pronounced in whispers by all ladies in America. They remind us too much of Babu English, and of what Persians say about our own side of the world.

There are, of course, rug books and rug books. It is not for a light-minded nomad to mock at the famous Austrian folios, at Bode, Martin, or Strzygowski, or even at Mr. J. K. Mumford. Mr. Mumford is by no means infallible. But his limitations have been those of opportunity, rather than of good faith. To him alone is due, in our country, the credit of having made some sort of order out of a picturesque chaos. He inquired, he studied, he travelled; and his book remains the most informing that has hitherto been published in America. If he pays the penalty, so does he deserve the glory, of the pioneer. And I hereby offer him a humble tribute of respect for having blazed out a way which many followers have done almost nothing to widen.

Having acquitted one's conscience of this debt of honour one is bound to add that if we take Mr. Mumford down, on those dark days when *Life* and *Punch* fail to turn up, it is chiefly for certain inessential items of information which he lets drop. As for the flock of which he is the spiritual father, I grant that they generally give more practical information, wherever they got it, than their

PERSIAN MINIATURES

cousins oversea, who love to bring forth sumptuous tomes more enlightening with regard to the myth of the Golden Fleece or the tomb of Iouiya and Touiyou than to the knots and knottinesses of rugs. But it is hard to escape the conviction that without Mr. Mumford the names of few of these ladies and gentlemen would ever have seen print. What enables them to get away with it, as the saying so expressively goes, is the great popularity of Oriental rugs in our country, and the greater ignorance of the countries from which they come. These authors have, of course, their own regroupings and emendations. But either the literature to which they contribute is a new proof of an old saying about great minds, or one recognises again and again Mr. Mumford's general plan, Mr. Mumford's facts, Mr. Mumford's textile tables, and Mr. Mumford's mistakes, down to his very quotations and turns of phrase. Or was it already an established jargon of the trade to abound in "conceits," and never to fail to say of a border stripe that it "carries" such and such a design? At all events, whenever I come across a reference to Professor Goodyear, to Owen Jones, or to Sir George Birdwood—he who had the courage to write at the top of a learned sheaf of paper "The Termless Antiquity of Integral Identity of the Oriental Manufacture of Sumptuary Carpets!"—I can't help asking myself if the author knows any more of the works in question than he gleaned from the pages of Mr. Mumford. But it is not because any of them ever so much as breathe the name of their ghostly parent. "For fifteen years," says Mr. Mumford in the preface to his fourth edition, "I have persistently 'winked at 'Omer down the road,' and 'Omer' has never once 'winked back.'"

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

I

To make a complete catalogue of the misinformation which the rug fraternity hand on from one to another would need "a painful man with his pen, and as much patience as he had, who wrote the Lives and Deaths of the Martyrs." A characteristic if mild example is the name *Yuruk*,* applied to a certain class of Turkish rugs and translated with astonishing unanimity by our authorities as meaning mountaineer. Whereas the real word is *Yürük*; and while some mountaineers are *Yürüks*, all *Yürüks* are by no means mountaineers. For the name literally signifies a man who walks: i. e., a nomad. A more complicated case is that of the napless carpets known in Persia as *gilim* and in Turkey as *kilim*. None of the rug books seem to be aware of this simple fact, and their spellings suffer accordingly. They all mention, however, a variety which they call *kis kilim*. I, for one, have never heard of it outside of a rug book or a rug shop. One reason, perhaps, is that there is no such word in Persian or Turkish as *kis*. Mr. Mumford explains a *kis kilim* as being a winter covering, thereby leading one to suspect that his informant was a Smyrniote. God has gifted the Levantine merchants of Polycarp's city with eloquent and with ingenious tongues, but not with tongues that are able to pronounce the Turkish language. *Kış kilimi* should be the true term—if it actually exists. But Mr. Mumford's followers, taking a little further counsel, inform us that a *kis kilim* is a girl rug, to which they attach an affecting history of dowries and what not. And they

*For the spelling followed in this book, see the last two paragraphs of the introduction.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

are equally wrong, since the word to which they refer should be *kīz*, with a vowel sound that neither a Greek nor an American can pronounce. You pays your money and you takes your choice.

Not so incorrect, perhaps, but more misleading, is a whole family of words which our authors quote in classifying rugs according to their uses. Thus they tell us that the long rugs technically known as runners were originally intended for divan covers; and they make quite a story of the arrangement of an Oriental interior, dragging in the classic triclinium and fixing the places of greater and of lesser honour on rugs of different sorts. I have no doubt that Mr. Mumford has seen Turkish rooms surrounded on three sides by divans, and divans covered with runners; but I doubt very much whether he ever saw anything of the sort in Persia or other parts of the East that are farther from Western influences. Nor can the allusion to the triclinium be otherwise than imaginative when the habit of the Near East is to eat on the floor, squatting about little round tables six or eight inches high. The real origin of the runner was probably in the tradition of the tent. In Persia particularly sets of rugs are quite common, of the same pattern and colour, consisting of one large carpet, of one runner as long as that carpet is wide, and of two more runners whose length is equal either to that of the carpet or to that of the carpet plus the width of the first runner. Such a set is called, like a team of horses, a *dasteh*, literally a handful; and its purpose is for furnishing tents or rooms of different sizes with the same rugs, piecing out the carpet when necessary with the accompanying runners. Mr. Mumford's name for those runners, *makatlik*, has justly been discarded by his suc-

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

cessors, who give them their true name of *kenari*. *Makatlık*, as the word should be, may roughly be translated as sofa covering, and *kenari* as bordering—from *kenar*, edge, which is common to Persian and Turkish alike.

As for the so-called *odjalik* or *odjaklik*, which I would correct and simplify as *ojaklık*, many descend on its place in Oriental hospitality, though no one attempts to fix its place with relation to those doubtful divans. It means, if you insist, a hearth rug. But I question if many of them can have been made for that purpose, for the simple reason that nothing is rarer in an Oriental house than a hearth. The cooking is done when possible outside, in the open or in a detached kitchen, while for heating, fire-places are much less popular than a device which I have already mentioned, called in Persian a *kursi*. If a rug were used in connection with it, the last thing a guest would be invited to do would be to take his place thereon. At night, however, he would be given such a rug to sleep on, and perhaps another for a quilt. So most of your hearth rugs, good people, are nothing more or less than beds.

The various other words ending in *lik* which Mr. Mumford was the first to introduce are not much more trustworthy. In the first place, they are all taken from the Ottoman Turkish language, and therefore do not apply to weaves from other countries. In the second place, that *lik* must be accepted with discretion, being a suffix something like our own suffix -ing. *Hebbelik*, for instance, must be accepted with double discretion because it should be *heibelik* and because *heibeh* alone means saddle bag—*heibelik* meaning, among other things, the material out of which saddle bags are made. And, in the third place, the vowel sound of that suffix undergoes varia-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

tions which this is not the place to explain but which the rug books never indicate. Misleading in another way is the so-called *hammamlik*, or bath rug; for while rugs may be found in the dressing rooms of baths, they are never of any one class, nor are they ever used, as the rug books affirm, in any part of a Turkish bath, at any rate, where they come in contact with soap and water. Still more misleading, however, is the term *turbeblik*. It does not mean a grave rug, nor do the people of the Near East leave rugs in cemeteries. What they very frequently do is to leave rugs as votive offerings in mausoleums, which are much commoner than with us and which go in Turkish by the name of *türbeh*. Thus the so-called grave rug is really identical with the so-called Mecca rug, which is often a prayer rug but which the more discerning of our authors recognise as forming no distinct species.

The most serious of this family of errors is the one relating to the word *sedjadeh*—or *sejjadeh*, as I would prefer to spell it. Mr. Mumford's disciples have improved upon him in certain minor details, but no one of them has ever yet discovered that a *sejjadeh* and what they unidiomatically term a *namazlik* are both one and the same—namely, a prayer rug. This is a case where a little knowledge of Oriental languages is good for writing about matters Oriental. For *sejjadeh* is derived from the Arabic root meaning worship, and by no means signifies a carpet of medium size. It may, however, be a carpet of medium size, or of the largest possible size. Many Turkish mosques contain huge Ushak carpets whose design consists of a multitude of pointed panels. Such a carpet is as much a *sejjadeh* as a small rug of one panel. But to say of the latter that every Mohammedan carries one around with

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

him, or so much as owns one, is absurd. If that were true, prayer rugs would be commoner than any other kind of a rug. Which is far from being the case.

Of all the gibberish that has been written on this subject, it would be hard to find more crowded into one page than may be read in Dr. G. G. Lewis's "Practical Book of Oriental Rugs" (2d ed., p. 321). After the usual remark about every Mohammedan possessing his own prayer rug, the author goes on to say: "By means of a small compass he spreads his rug so that the mihrab or niche points toward Mecca, where Mohammed's body lies. Then after removing all money and jewellery from his person, in order to appear before God in the most abject humility, he combs his beard, produces a rosary of ninety-nine beads and a dried cake of earth which came from Mecca. These he places just under the niche and then, resting his head on the earth with his hands outstretched on either side, he performs his devotions. The mihrab or niche on which the worshipper places his head represents the door of a mosque and reminds those who use it of the sacred mosque at Mecca." And elsewhere Dr. Lewis propounds the alternative theory that the *mibrab* "is supposed to imitate the form of the Mihrab in the temple at Mecca" (p. 121), and that the so-called comb designed on some Turkish prayer rugs is "an emblem of the Mohammedan faith to remind the devout that cleanliness is next to godliness" (p. 108).

Now hardly one of these statements is true. Compasses are sometimes carried by pilgrims and travellers, but so rarely that the different directions in which they pray is one of the stock matters of pleasantry among Mohammedans. Far rarer is that precious cake of dried

PERSIAN MINIATURES

earth from Mecca; and the preparations for prayer have more to do with running water than with a comb, which most decidedly is not an emblem of the Mohammedan faith. Neither are you ever likely to see a rosary of ninety-nine beads—though you might see one of sixty-six beads. The common number is thirty-three. But the rosary plays no part in the rite of the prayer rug; and when used its place is in the owner's hand, which at no moment of his devotions does he stretch out from his side. Nor does he remove money and jewellery from his person, unless they happen to be gold and he happens to be extremely orthodox. That is why so many fine Oriental stones are set in silver. As for the procedure of prayer, the devotee first stands, then drops to his knees, and finally prostrates himself, repeating these three positions a different number of times according to circumstances. And the pointed panel of the prayer rug neither represents the door of a mosque nor the *mibrab* of the temple at Mecca. The temple at Mecca contains no *mibrab*, being itself the centre of the axes of the Mohammedan world. Moreover, Mohammed, as it happens, is buried in Medina. What the panel of a prayer rug represents, if anything, is the *mibrab* of an ordinary mosque—a niche roughly corresponding to the altar of a church; and the finest of single-panelled rugs were made to put into such a niche. Most devotees content themselves with any kind of carpet or matting to pray on—or even their own coats, if other conveniences lack.

Do you wonder, then, that rug books are capable of affording us a kind of pleasure that their authors never intended? On the whole, I think Dr. Lewis is our favourite. He is also the favourite of those who buy rug books, if one may judge from the fact that he went in two years

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

into two editions. And his book would have deserved its title if he had only taken the trouble to make it accurate and consistent. As it is, how can we keep straight faces when he talks about Greek Mohammedans (p. 222), or reveals to us that a talismanic triangle is often tattooed on a Turk's body (p. 137), or says that green is a favourite colour of Persian rug makers (p. 79), or announces that a dog is considered in the Near East a sacred animal (p. 110), or emits such samples of Turkish as she is spoke as *ubrech* and *sechrudisib*—for *ibrik* (pitcher) and *sîchan dishi* (rat's or mouse's tooth)? The pearl of this collection, however, is his statement that *lule*, or *luleh*, of all words the most mystifying to his brothers of the craft, is “a corruption of the Persian word ‘roulez,’ meaning ‘jewel’” (p. 349; cf. 163). Some Armenian rug dealer must have stuck a fluent tongue in a capacious cheek when he achieved that etymology—for I would gladly entertain the hypothesis that it did not burst from the brain of Dr. Lewis. So far as I am able to learn, there is no word in Persian which remotely resembles *roulez*. There is a word *lu'lu*, which is a less common word for pearl; and in another place Dr. Lewis provides the form *roules* with that meaning. But *luleh* is no corruption of it—nor, as Mr. Mumford avers, of the French *roulez*, though he is on the right track. *Luleh* is a word which both in Persian and in Turkish means pipe or tube. And it is applied not only to Bijar but to any smallish carpets which are too heavy to be folded when out of use, and are therefore rolled.

On matters of geography and spelling I am willing to touch the more lightly, knowing how far the East is from

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the West and how recalcitrant the English alphabet to render its own sounds, let alone those of other languages. But after all libraries do exist, containing fairly reliable books of reference. And even in New York and Philadelphia, whence emanate most of these instructive works, there dwell orientalists of repute, who might conceivably have information to impart. Yet our authors seem to prefer to consult, if not one another, then the Armenian rug dealer around the corner, or haply some traveller returned alive from what they invariably term "the Orient." Thus we learn from Mr. W. D. Ellwanger of the most accessible region of "the Orient" that "most of the rugs of commerce in this country come from Persia, Turkey, Asia Minor, Turkestan . . ." ("The Oriental Rug," p. 13.) Is a surprised reader wrong in drawing the inference that Turkey and Asia Minor are supposed to have no connection with each other? Of the latter Dr. Lewis informs us that it is bounded "on the south by Arabia, the Mediterranean and Red Seas" (p. 342). And Anatolia is usually spoken of as if it existed in some fourth dimension entirely outside the peninsula in question. Whereas the name is merely the Greek one for Asia Minor—from which the Turks derive their Anadol.

It is perhaps not unnatural that the rug-geographer becomes more involved in obscurity as he penetrates farther into "the Orient." Kurdistan, for instance, is to him a constant stumbling block—as indeed it is to most westerners, who do not readily take in the conception of that Asiatic Poland, with its loosely related, semi-independent tribes living partly under Persian and partly under Turkish suzerainty, and producing within a few miles of each other such totally different weaves as the

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

Bijar and the "Sehna." So does Dr. Lewis find it in him to say that "the southern part of Armenia is called Kurdistan" (p. 218). Of Persia proper I have read astounding things, of which not the least astounding is that no one but Mr. Mumford seems to recognise Iran as the name by which the Persians at this moment designate their own country. Whence will appear the true beauty of giving that name, as dealers and rug books love to do, to a certain class of rugs from the province of Irak Ajemi. And even Mr. Mumford opens the preface of his fourth edition with the strange information that "the past decade has witnessed in Persia the downfall of a dynasty, and indeed of the throne itself. The oldest of empires has been for a space the newest of republics. . . ." While elsewhere (p. 165) he says "that the Persian of to-day is a transplanted Turk, that the language used over the greater part of the empire is a peculiar form of Turkish, and that the pure Persian, the Iranian, is a *rara avis* in the land whose name he bears." The pure Persian is no doubt as rare a bird as the pure Italian, say, or the pure Christian. But while the reigning dynasty is of Turkoman origin, and while a Turkish dialect is spoken in Azerbaijan and—to a lesser extent—in the neighbourhood of Hamadan, the vast majority of Persians neither understand it nor are transplanted Turks. Mr. Mumford's mistakes, however, usually lie in a too broad application of a particular fact. He would be incapable of announcing like Dr. Lewis, and of twice repeating, that Laristan and Luristan are identical (pp. 202, 349, 350).

As for Turkestan and the Caucasus, they might as well be Mars and the moon. I cannot deny that the Caucasus is politically a part of Russia—though I would

PERSIAN MINIATURES

not stake my head on the certainty of its so remaining to the end of time. But no Russian ever made a rug, or least of all a Yürük rug, as Mr. Ellwanger seems to intimate (p. 63). Nor, as the rug books inform us with wonderful unanimity, is Kazak a corruption of Cossack, the case being exactly the contrary. And if the Caucasus be Russia, so are the trans-Caspian provinces. To call them so, at any rate, would save the rug-scriveners from the No Man's Land they make of that vast and little-visited region. You would think, to read their classifications, that east of the Caspian one name is good as another, and that it is all the same whether you say Bokhara, Merv, Khiva, Samarkand, or Turkestan.

In the finer points of orthography the rug book people are not wholly to blame for the fantastic things they do. Englishmen and Americans have always been notorious for the liberties they take with foreign names. But there is more than a suspicion of unscholarliness in the unsystematic spelling of these books, their general failure to give a key to their own pronunciation, and the importance they attribute to variant forms. Dr. Lewis perhaps expresses their general state of mind when he confides to us (p. 341, note) that "in the Turkish and Persian languages the vowels are frequently silent and the characters do not stand for single consonants, but represent combinations of sounds as in short-hand, so that the same word is spelled in a great variety of ways when it is translated into English" Mark that "translated"! It is true that the Arabic alphabet is short of vowels, and that the different races who use it twist it as variously as do the people of Europe the long-suffering Roman alphabet. But neither in Persian nor in Turkish are there short-hand

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

combinations of consonants—unless the same thing may be said of Greek and Russian, which are richer than English in having single letters to represent such sounds as *tb* or *sb*. The bottom of the matter is that neither Dr. Lewis nor any one else will take the trouble to find out how a name is pronounced in its own country, and to choose a consistent method of rendering that name in English. Thus it is that the author of "The Practical Book of Oriental Rugs" encumbers his pages with a quantity of so called synonyms, which are nothing but variant—and usually very incorrect—spellings he has chanced to pick up. A case in point is the town of Elisavetpol, in the Transcaucasus, whose older name of Ganja or Genjeh has caused fountains of ink to flow. Dr. Lewis calls the rugs of this district Genghis, which he directs us to pronounce Jen'-gis, giving as "synonyms" Guenja, Guendja, and Guenjes. He goes on to state that "authorities differ greatly as to the origin of the name. Some say that the proper name should be Guenja, which was the ancient name of Elizabethpol, from whence they came. Others insist that they should be called Genghis, which is the name of the tribe of Nomads living in the vicinity of Elizabethpol who weave them" (p. 267). If Dr. Lewis had thought fit to consult other authorities than his predecessors in the American literature of rugs, one or two of whom relate "Genghis" to the conqueror Chingiz Khan, he would very easily have found out that Ganja is a perfectly well-known town, founded by Kobad I, Sasanian king of Persia, in the fifth or sixth century of our era, and famous as the birthplace of the Persian poet Nizami, who wrote the epics of "Khosrev and Shirin" and "Majnun and Leila". He would also have found out that the elusive

PERSIAN MINIATURES

vowel sounds of that Persian name—which is used to this day by thousands of Caucasians—vary between *a* and *e*, and that a final *i* is a Persian and Azeri Turkish suffix of origin, equivalent to the Ottoman Turkish *li*—by which Mr. Mumford not too correctly designates a man of Hamadan. A man or a thing from Hamadan is locally termed Hamadani. And so, by a perfectly comprehensible contraction, Ganji or Genji. Which, about as nearly as can be arrived at in English, is the correct form.

Of Hamadan itself Dr. Lewis gives the baroque “synonyms” Hamadie and Hamidieh. Where in the world he fished up Hamadie I can’t imagine; but Hamidieh is a Turkish adjective made out of the name Hamid, having no more to do with Hamadan than our own adjective Augustan. Diverting as his “synonyms” are, however, it is when we come to the glossary at the end of his book that the rafters of Ecbatana— Well, they can hardly ring, because they are neatly encased in mud. And how should the rug book people know any better, poor dears? Yet why should they voluntarily, and with so little pains at verification or proof-reading, throw themselves to the lions? One reason is that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an Anglo-Saxon to get it into his head that the *b* in Bokhara and Daghestan means something, and that practically every word in his Oriental vocabulary must be accented on the last syllable. To do so, at all events, would save him from such horrors as Af-ghan'-is-tan, An-go'-ra, or Fer'-a-ghan. Of the last I am happy to recognise that Dr. Lewis does not direct us to sound the *g*. And, after all, it is useless to attempt to reform the Anglo-Saxon world in the matter of pronouncing those two gutturals *gh* and *kh*. They are disagreeable

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

sounds, and one must use disagreeable terms in describing them. The first is the noise you make in your throat when you gargle, while the second is the worse noise you make when you have a cold and set about clearing your throat—if you are ever so impolite as to hawk. But it will do you no harm to remember that those sounds are perfectly distinct from a simple *g* or *k*, and that letters exist to express them in the eastern as in some western languages.

3

All this, of course, has little to do with the serious part of rug books, which is the description and classification of rugs. And even if we in Ecbatana can't help an occasional chuckle, we know it isn't fair to chuckle too loudly about people who haven't been as lucky as we. One expert, however, authoress of "Rugs in Their Native Land," confesses that "a residence of many years in Turkey, part of the time in the far interior, offered ample opportunity to continue the study of Oriental rugs begun in America." And elsewhere she alludes to her familiarity with the language of the country (p. 130). I do not like to seem rude to a lady; but I could hardly help asking myself which of the various languages of the country this lady meant when I saw how she spelled names, and when I read that *khatchli*, alias *katchli* and *hardjlie*, used in describing the so-called Princess Bokharas, is the Armenian name for cross. The Armenian name for a cross is *khach*, which might better be simplified for Anglo-Saxon readers as *bach*. The Turks, lacking such a word of their own, borrow it from the Armenians—to say nothing here of the Greeks—and on occasion add their own suffix of origin,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

description, or possession, *li.* *Hachlı*, therefore, is a Turkish form, meaning crossed, or having a cross.

Truth further obliges me to confide in the reader that I fail to find any particular evidence of Miss or Mrs. Dunn having availed herself of the ample opportunity she mentions. She misses her chance of writing something really first-hand and personal about rugs, even in that limited part of their native land with which she is acquainted, and she repeats many of the stock misnomers which the rug books bid fair to make permanent. Thus she classes the Mosul—Musul, I am told, is the local pronunciation—among Turkish products, and states that more rugs are made in and shipped from that district than from any other except Smyrna (pp. 86, 100). As a matter of fact, comparatively few rugs are made in the neighbourhood of Mosul, and practically none are now shipped from there—or were before the war. The sole connection that a Mosul rug has with Mosul is that a certain class of small Kurdish rugs were once collected in that city by Jewish dealers, on behalf of their principals in Baghdad. Since 1900 this trade has passed to the other side of the mountains, and Hamadan is now the market for “Mosuls.” They are small, loosely woven, high-piled rugs of the poorer qualities, partly from Turkish, oftener from Persian Kurdistan, and from the region around Hamadan extending even as far south as Malayir.

There are other things about the obscure subject of Kurdistan that a lady who has lived in the far interior of Turkey might have told us. But she leaves us to gather what is far from the fact—that the inhabitants are all of the one Dersim tribe she mentions (p. 102). And she lets slip a brilliant opportunity to tell her fellow connois-

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

seurs what none of them except Mr. Mumford seems to suspect, that the town they oftenest name "Sehna" is purely Kurdish, being—as Sauj Bulagh used to be—the capital of Persian Kurdistan, and that "Sehna" rugs are Kurdish and not Persian. With regard to her travels in remoter regions of "the Orient" our authoress maintains a discreet reticence. But we can hardly assume that they included Persia when she makes a distinction between "Kirmansha" and Kermanshah, and asserts of carpets bearing the latter name that they are made in Tabriz. I hasten to add, however, that she is by no means alone in this astonishing belief. Mr. Mumford was the first to give voice to it, and it has been followed more or less faithfully by every one of his successors whom I have consulted except Mary Beach Langton, in her little book on "How to Know Oriental Rugs" (p. 78). I might add in passing that the serious student will hardly learn from Mrs. Langton how to know Oriental rugs, but that she shows other evidences of having gone outside the pages of her colleagues for her information. The truth is that Kermans, Kirmans, "Kirmanshas," and "Kermanshahs" are all one and the same. They have nothing whatever to do with either Kermanshah or Tabriz, except that the modern industry in Tabriz was started by weavers from Kerman, who imported their own designs and methods of work. The Tabrizis, in turn, have influenced the modern output of Meshed. As for Kermanshah, which does happen to be an important wool and trading centre, it is hardly an exaggeration to affirm that no rugs are or ever were made there. What the Satrap told us to the contrary was either the exception that proves the rule or a quotation from his reminiscences of another province. The name grew out of

PERSIAN MINIATURES

the ignorance or perverted ingenuity of dealers, who knew nothing about so remote a town as Kerman, who were confused by its similarity to the name of Kermanshah, and whose romantic eyes were attracted by the termination of the latter. A "Kermanshah" is merely a better example of a modern Kerman. And when the rug is unusually big, and the dealer wishes to be unusually impressive, he pronounces it, out of the magniloquence of his own exuberant heart, a "royal Kermanshah." A precisely similar case is that of the so-called royal or princess "Bokharas"—which, as it happens, do not come from Bokhara.

Eliza Dunn makes a less pardonable confusion, and one that I do not recollect having encountered elsewhere, when she speaks of "Meshed or Muskabad" (pp. 103, 117). Meshed and Muskabad, or Mushkabad, are, in Persia, very nearly as far as the East is from the West. For Meshed is Meshed, while Mushkabad is Sultanabad—of the better classes. Mushkabad was the name of a town between Kum and Sultanabad which the long-bearded Fat'h Ali Shah destroyed about a hundred years ago, and Sultanabad is its modern successor. Eliza Dunn might be surprised to hear that most modern Saruks are woven in the latter place, as I always am in museums to find a certain kind of mediæval pottery labelled Sultanabad.

I am delighted to give this lady the credit of recognising that the so-called Bokhara rugs are really Turkoman. But otherwise she does nothing to dispel the haze of ignorance that makes possible so preposterous a misnomer as "Khiva Bokhara." A Khiva Bokhara means just about as much as a Boston New York one, and it is time

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

the rug people had the courage to say so. Our authoress runs the gauntlet of a certain proverb about a little knowledge when she asserts that the Turkoman "prayer rugs are called Tekke from their use in Tekkes or places of worship" (p. 132), apparently oblivious to the fact that there are in Transcaspia tribes of Akhal Tekkeh, Merv Tekkeh, and heaven only knows how many other kinds of Tekkeh Turkomans. In the matter of Beluchistan, again, she veers a point nearer the truth than most of her fellow-scribes, who outdo each other in moving descriptions of the hot and arid homeland of Beluch rugs. I do not pretend myself to know anything about Beluchistan, or whether rugs are made in any part of it. I do know, however, that most of the Beluch rugs of commerce, if not all, come neither from Beluchistan nor, as Eliza Dunn states, from Kerman, but from Khorasan. They are woven by nomad Beluchis who pitch their black tents in the lower part of that province. The two chief markets for them are Birjand, the capital of that region and an important centre of rug weaving, and Turbat-i-Haidari, some ninety miles south of Meshed—not to be confused with another Turbat nearer the Afghan border. In the Asiatic trade these rugs are rightly called Beluch. The other two syllables are added by logical-minded westerners jumping at conclusions.

II

I have already intimated, and I am ready to repeat in so many words, that it is possible to go too far in making merry over books which never intended to say the last word on an extremely complicated subject. If the reader will grant me that it is one of the first impulses of man to

PERSIAN MINIATURES

laugh at the misnaming of things and places familiar to him, I will grant the reader that it is something for an inhabitant of New York or Philadelphia to have found out where so many of the rugs on his floor came from—and that the present critic, for his own part, knows very much less about it than the most unreliable of the writers he criticises. I will also grant that rugs and words are something alike in that they are the common property of all mankind, and not, like marbles or canvases or other products of the more aristocratic arts, the guarded possession of a chosen few. Consequently the bounds between art and industry in these two forms of weaving are vaguer than in certain other departments of creative activity. And the owner of ten or twenty-five or sixty Asiatic rugs needs less courage to make a book about them than the possessor of a similar number of old Chinese porcelains or Italian paintings. Moreover, there is not yet, as indeed more than one writer of rug books has pointed out, an authoritative literature on the subject. The field is still open to whom-ever will take it.

But it will never be taken in any such way as the one hitherto followed by American writers. It is no flattering proof of what we know of the East and its arts, or of the standards of criticism accepted among us, that publishers can go on issuing these more or less expensive picture books, improvised out of Mr. Mumford and water. Whether we regard rugs as works of art or as household conveniences, surely they deserve a study no less specialised than etchings, say, or textiles. The simplest handbook of any other art or industry presupposes a back-ground of knowledge entirely foreign to these books. The fact is that not one of their authors possesses the equip-

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

ment to write a satisfactory rug book. If I include Mr. Mumford in this assertion, I must repeat that he deserves great credit for his pioneer work in an empty field. His followers, however, have done practically nothing to clarify and add to the data which he made available to them. For they persist in following a method by which it is hopeless to arrive at any solid result.

Their method, one gathers from their books, is to sit down with Mr. Mumford in one hand and a school geography in the other, dictating until they feel the need of illumination on some obscure point—when they seek enlightenment from an Armenian rug pedlar or from the buyer of a department store who has been three times to Smyrna, Constantinople, Tiflis, and Tabriz. Their conception of “the Orient,” at any rate, seems not to differ very materially from the Persian idea of *Firengistan*, which for the common run of Iranians lumps America with Europe and presupposes for us all a common history and language. Otherwise how could Mr. Ellwanger, for instance, declare that Arabic is the *lingua franca* of the Near East (p. 122), or Dr. Lewis air his views of the Arabic alphabet, or their colleagues one and all trot out their “*namazlik*,” “*hebbelik*,” etc., as applicable to all prayer rugs, saddlebags, and so forth? They are not to blame for not knowing Arabic and all the other languages and dialects of Asia. But they are scarcely to be commended for volunteering information about matters of which they know little or nothing. It naturally makes one distrust everything they have to say. And I, for one, am unable to comprehend their childlike faith in the gentlemen of the trade.

It is true enough that our knowledge and enjoyment of

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Oriental rugs has been gained chiefly in the way of trade, and that dealers were long, perhaps still are, our best authorities. But while some dealers are educated men, and have enjoyed wide experience in centres both of rug selling and rug weaving, they do not appear to be the ones to whom the rug book people apply. Is it necessary to point out that because a man happens to buy or sell rugs, and knows how to distinguish many varieties of them, or even to speak one or two of the languages of their makers, it does not follow that he is infallible with regard to every phase of the subject? For the rest, few Armenian rug dealers in America ever set their foot in any centre of rug weaving, or ever troubled themselves about little matters like geography, orthography, philology, or ethnology. Few of them, either, ever in their lives hesitated for an answer. For the Oriental point of view is that courtesy requires an answer to a question, the actual truth of the reply being quite a secondary matter. Few American buyers, furthermore, remain in the countries they visit long enough to acquire much first-hand information. And the professional rug buyer is first and foremost a business man, not much more likely than his Armenian colleague to ask himself or any one else questions about the broader aspects of the commerce in which he is engaged. He is, I like to think, constitutionally more willing to utter the simple phrase "I don't know." But it is as easy for him as for any one else to give a particular fact a general application, or to think that "Iran" and "Kermanshah" and "Khiva Bokhara" are good enough names for certain recognised kinds of rugs.

I have perhaps gone too far about to intimate what might have been said in a sentence: that the writer of a

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

satisfactory rug book should be a connoisseur doubled by an Orientalist. He should possess exact and detailed knowledge of rugs, their manufacture, the places they come from. He should know something about the languages of those places, to say nothing of their geography, their history, their customs, and their art. And he should have in him enough of a critical method to be capable of putting his material into workmanlike form. How else can he avoid such pitfalls as I have already pointed out, or hope to write a book worthy of ranking with serious studies of other arts? For this art, this industry if you prefer, is too complex and set in too unfamiliar a background to be adequately treated by a foreigner without a lifetime of research.

Consider, for instance, the important detail of classification, which justly fills so large a part of every rug book. Most of our authors classify carpets on geographical lines, enumerating the different countries of Asia where rugs are woven and taking some account of the different provinces of those countries—especially in Persia. But they also cling to trade names, based on however false a geography. And besides taking these and other liberties with the map, they further confuse the reader by jumping from their geographical classification to other systems based on similarities of weave or design. Thus most of them make a distinction between a Meshed rug and a Khorasan—Meshed being, of course, the chief city of that province—while maintaining a mysterious silence with regard to other weaves of Khorasan. Mr. Mumford, again, invents the name Kirmanieh, under which he includes not only Kerman but “Khorasan,” Meshed, Herat, and Shiraz. And Dr. Lewis transfers Kashan to Azerbaijan, further

PERSIAN MINIATURES

making distinctions between Ardelan and Eastern Kurdistan which do not square with the facts. As for the great north-central Persian province of Irak Ajemi, originally extending from the Elburzrange to Isfahan, it now means to the Persians the country around Sultanabad, the Fera'han-Saruk-Serabend country, which may be stretched to include Kum and Kashan. This comparatively small area produces more rugs than any other in Persia, and it is by no means inaccessible. Yet over it reigns in the rug books a twilight of darkest Africa. How, then, until the writers of the books know what they are talking about, and what perhaps no one in the American trade is competent to tell them, can they possibly classify with accuracy or perspective?

The problem, I admit, is far from simple. But it will never be solved in a New York library—or even in the saloon of an excursion boat on the Great Lakes, where, I am informed, one of the most popular of our authors, while on a midsummer holiday, composed his *magnum opus*. Dr. Lewis tells us that there are over fifty varieties of commercial rugs (p. 161). If he had said five hundred he would have fallen short of the truth. The fact is that there are many more kinds of rugs than any one seems to suspect. Which partly accounts for such absurd trade names as "Iran" and "Kermanshah." Such trade names as Mahal, Mushkabad, and Savalan, on the other hand, are more legitimate, having been invented by modern manufacturers to designate different grades of their own Sultanabads. But there are undreamt of subtleties even behind the most straightforward name. A Hamadan, for example, is universally described in the books as having a camel border, or a camel ground diapered in a

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

lighter shade, ornamented with what our authors elegantly name a pole medallion. Whereas the majority of Hamadans are of quite other types. And until 1912, or thereabouts, not one of them came from the town of Hamadan. The plain *shotori* (camel-coloured) Hamadan is made in the adjoining district of Mehraban, while the diapered or *shireb-shekeri* (syrupy!) is from a place called Dargezin. Others are from Borchalu, Erzamfud, Famenin, Injelas, Kabutraheng, etc.—all as truly Hamadans as the camel rugs, because they are woven in the region of Hamadan and marketed here, yet each distinctly recognisable to the expert by its own local characteristics. And every other rug centre has similar local subdivisions, the vast majority of which remain unknown to the books.

A primary essential, then, of a satisfactory rug book is that it should include reliable maps. In this respect the existing books are woefully deficient. Few of them contain even approximately accurate plans of any Asiatic country, while none of them show the whereabouts of all the places they mention. Much less do any of them give detailed charts of the principal centres of weaving. This is the less excusable because the whole background of this art whose masterpieces bear the names of tribes, provinces, and cities is geography. Only on geographical lines can any clear idea be gained of the different schools of rugs, or any foundation be laid for their history and an understanding of their mutual relations. But it is not enough to follow a contemporary atlas, however exact—as these are at times to teach us. For no contemporary atlas can show how boundaries have shifted even in the lifetime of existing rugs. This is particularly true of a country like Persia, whose interior provinces and exterior frontiers

PERSIAN MINIATURES

have varied enormously throughout the long period during which weavers have sat at looms. And small matters like colour and design are often intimately connected with those variations. Thus the eastern half of the Transcaucasus was Persian far longer than it has been Russian. Northern Armenia and Mosul have frequently been subject to Persia. Mesopotamia has oftener than not been a part of that empire. As for Khorasan, it is now scarcely a quarter of the immense Province of the Sun which formerly ran out to the Oxus and included much of modern Afghanistan. Yet writers of rug books apologise for relating Herat to Meshed—when it is not a hundred years since an imaginary line was drawn between them, and scarcely two hundred since the Afghans made their official entrance into history. It is extremely important, too, to remember that Transoxiana was for centuries as much a part of Persia as Fars: is supposed, indeed, to have been the birthplace of the Iranian race.

The geographical background, again, is intimately associated with the historical. The latter has hitherto been treated in far too summary a manner, with more information about the Jews and the Egyptians than about the people of the colder regions which are the true habitat of the rug. As yet we know next to nothing about the origins and affiliations of our art. The oldest existing samples of rug weaving are fragments of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, whereas we are well aware that the secret of knotting strands of coloured wool on a foundation of taut strings is of far more antique invention. And it would be extremely interesting to find out who discovered this secret. The Chinese, perhaps, whose civilisation developed so early and so widely? We know,

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

at all events, that long before the Christian era caravans were passing to and fro between Mongolia and Khorasan. A pretty point waits to be established, too, as to how much the Turks took with them into Asia Minor, and how much they found there when they arrived. There are resemblances between Turkoman, Caucasian, and Anatolian weaves which look like landmarks of an old migration. Yet Marco Polo, who passed through Asia Minor toward the end of the thirteenth century, found Greeks and Armenians weaving "the finest and handsomest carpets in the world."

This is, of course, a subject excessively difficult to approach, by reason of a lack of documents. Certain documents do exist, however, in the shape of old Persian and Arabic geographies or histories. Thus we know that as long ago as the tenth century Bokhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent were centres of carpet weaving, and that this Persian manufacture was at least dabbled in by the neighbouring Turks of inner Asia. At the same period looms were busy in Birjand, Fars, and even Mesopotamia. Under the Mongols of the thirteenth century a school of rugs grew up in what is now the province of Mazanderan. Marco Polo does not specifically mention the carpets of Kerman, but he speaks of "hangings for the use of noblemen," while I have noted in Howorth's "History of the Mongols" that Ghazan, the Mongolian Khan of Persia to whom Marco Polo brought a princess out of China, caused carpets for his palace to be woven at Shiraz. And not only did the Venetians who two hundred years later visited the court of the Turkoman king Uzun Hasan, at Tabriz, have a great deal to say in passing about his beautiful carpets, but innumerable other European chroniclers

PERSIAN MINIATURES

and travellers of the Middle Ages mention that famous product of Persia.

Other documents that wait to be deciphered are the historic rugs in public and private collections. These are the old masters of the art, which with the exception of the Ardebil of South Kensington and a few other celebrated carpets remain strangely unknown to most of our experts. There are entire books to be made out of the museums. And more to the point than quoting Scripture and the Odyssey, or describing the enormous jewelled carpet which the Arab conquerors found and cut up at Ctesiphon in 637, would be a chapter—there is room for a fat monograph—on the rugs of pictures. The old Dutch and Italian painters could furnish between them a priceless collection, which should shed no little light on the history of our art. Of this Mr. W. A. Hawley, at least ("Oriental Rugs, Antique and Modern"), is aware, if he has not found time to go so thoroughly into the subject as Bode and Lessing.

A detail of less importance, but one of which a scholarly rug book would take cognisance, is one already touched on, namely spelling. There is the more excuse, as I said a few pages back, for the inaccuracies and inconsistencies in which our authors abound, because the Roman alphabet was not invented to spell the English language, and because the users of that language have not yet fully agreed on how to convey its sounds. The case is further complicated by the fact that other sharers of the Roman alphabet have sounds and systems of their own, into which the rug book people, as well as geographers and writers of travel, occasionally dip. Hence that *d* in "*sedjadeh*" and that *t* in "*khatchli*," which are necessary

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

to the Frenchman but superfluous for us. More superfluous is the unwieldy German *dsch* which I have occasionally come across in place of a simple English *j*. Another complication is that Oriental languages contain sounds for which we have no exact equivalent. Then the same name may be pronounced or written differently by an Arab, a Persian, or a Turk, or even by dwellers in different parts of the same country. A case in point is the habit of the Arabs of using a *j* where the Persians use a *g*. Nor, again, is it easy to settle on the form of a name. To the people of Persian Kurdistan the name of their capital, known to us as Sehna or Senna, is Senendúch, while Persians and Turks speak of it as Sineh. The ancient city of Gordium, equally well known in carpet literature, enjoys a no less wonderful variety of titles, of which the Turkish is Györ-déz and the modern Greek Yórthes—with the *th* hard.

But even when we agree on a form, we seldom agree how to convey the sound of that form to the Anglo-Saxon eye and tongue. I think it quite hopeless to attempt to do so by means of any phonetic system relying on the more purely English combinations, like *ee*, *oo*, final *ie*, and all the rest. There are too many phonetic systems, and too few people understand each others.' Moreover they are rarely consistent or complete. Mr. Mumford and his family, for instance, usually refer to a well-known Persian province as Azerbijan. This spelling takes for granted, I suppose, that the reader will pronounce the *i* as in kite, but neglects to consider the fact that the other vowels must be uttered in a way which does not come natural to Anglo-Saxons. Our only hope is to adopt some system like that of the Royal Geographical Society, happily coming into vogue among our own editors and map-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

makers. If you have to learn its conventions in order to be able to use it, so do you with any other system—English being the patchwork language it is. And this system has the great merit of being both simple and logical.

A lesser but by no means negligible detail in which the existing rug books fall short is that of illustration. And it is the less negligible because so many of them bid for favour on the score of their coloured plates. As a youthful reader of romance I was always deeply offended when a heroine expressly described by the author as blonde was portrayed by the illustrator as a brunette, or when the death of the villain was depicted a dozen pages before or after the event. In the course of years my destiny led me into the retreats where these crimes are committed, and I have come to understand how they take place. But with me, I fear, to comprehend is not to pardon. As a mature reader of rug books I continue to be offended—by pictures that seem to be chosen for airy reasons of decoration or availability, that put the student to the greatest possible inconvenience in comparing them with the text, or that fail to do all they can for him in the thorny matter of classification. Mr. Hawley does more for his reader than any one else, and Dr. Lewis is in this respect more satisfactory than Mr. Mumford—though I have reason to suspect that if Mr. Mumford had been allowed to make his later editions more than reprints he would have improved them in this as in other particulars. But no rug book that I have come across illustrates all the stock designs, or inserts the illustrations at the right place. A small black-and-white, setting forth an essential point at the psychological moment, is worth more than the most elaborate coloured plate stuck

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

in where it is most convenient for the folder of the sheets and most economical for the publisher of the book.

Among other matters worth consideration, that of the technical processes of rug weaving will bear more study than has yet been given them. I am told by those who know more about such things than I do that the variety of knots and their spacing between strands of the foundation is greater than the rug books would lead us to believe, and that the last word has not been said about the materials used. Although the high, dry climate of the Asiatic plateaux is commonly averred to be responsible for the sheen and softness of the best rugs, none have a greater softness or sheen than the old Anatolians, whose wool was produced not far from sea level. And it is a fact that perhaps the most perfect rugs made in Persia to-day are woven at Kashan out of Australian wool, which is finer and silkier than any grown in "the Orient."

As for dyes, ancient and modern, the rug book people beat their breasts a little more vehemently than they need. They mourn the growing rarity of the old vegetable dyes, and they do well. They omit to add, however, that as garish horrors have been perpetrated with vegetable dyes as with mineral. Nor are the former so fast as the rug books contend. On the contrary, the beauty of vegetable dyes is that they will fade. The point is that they fade evenly, one shade toning into another. Whereas aniline dyes fade unevenly. The reds have a tendency to retain their vigour; while certain other colours eventually disappear. A greater fault is that they tend to harden the wool, thereby dulling the sheen which is the honour of old age. But in Persia and Tur-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

key, at all events, aniline dyes are employed by no means so generally as the rug book people imagine. Not only are there in Persia penalties against their importation, and against the exportation of rugs in which they are used, but it is quite incorrect to say as Dr. Lewis does (pp. 78, 218) that two-thirds or three-quarters of modern Turkish rugs are aniline dyed. What neither he nor any one else mentions is the growing employment of alizarin dyes. These also tend to harden the wool, though it remains for a later century to determine the ultimate effect of this process. But their greatest fault is the mythic virtue ascribed to the vegetable dyes: they will neither fade nor wash out. Whence is it that those who use them incline to soft shades unknown to the old weavers, in an attempt to anticipate the tone of age so prized by western buyers.

There is more to be learned than we yet know about the colour scale of different weaves, and their schemes of colour combination. A point in this connection which has never been taken up is that of outline. If you look into a Persian rug you will discover that each figure is bounded by a line of another colour, sometimes so fine as to be almost imperceptible. Yet this inconspicuous outline has an extraordinary effect on the field of colour it encloses. The same tint will have an entirely different look, or shade into different directions of the spectrum, according to the colour of its outline. Some schools of rugs, like the Bijar, have been found to follow invariable rules for outlining. A wider knowledge of such laws, therefore, would of course be a help in identification.

A subject of the utmost complexity, and one which awaits a profounder scholarship than has yet dealt with it,

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

is that of design. There is much easy talk in the rug books about tribal marks and symbols, about Greece, Egypt, further Asia, and Central America, about palms, lotuses, and Trees of Life, to say nothing of knots of destiny, stars of the Medes, shields of David and Solomon, and S's of the Fire Worshippers. It all tends, however, to excite rather than to satisfy our curiosity. When Dr. Lewis announces (p. 147) that he has devoted more consideration to this topic than any of his predecessors, he forces the critic to add that if one removed from Dr. Lewis's chapter on design everything relating to China and India there would be little left besides hearsay or guesswork. And the value of his claim may be judged from the fact that in the rest of his book he omits any mention whatever of Indian rugs, while to the subject of China he devotes a grand total of six pages.

As our authors study the map and read—perhaps in Mr. Mumford, whose treatment of this vast subject, however inadequate, is again more worthy than that of his followers—of the caravans, the conquests, the migrations, which have swept back and forth across Asia, it no doubt seems highly plausible to them that a motive originating in Egypt or India should find lodgment in a Persian or Caucasian rug. Nor can any one deny that the transfusion of decorative ideas is as old as the swastika. How else should Persian miniatures and portraits of Lucrezia Crivelli be hanging in an English house in Hamadan? The period of *chinoiserie* in European ornament is one fanciful chapter of this tendency. I myself might write another on the unexpected places where I have found familiar details of rugs. I have seen on an old Resht embroidery, and above a dado of very Chinese-looking

PERSIAN MINIATURES

tiles in a fifteenth century mosque at Adrianople, as in the marble arch of more than one Turkish door, the identical pattern of reciprocal trefoils so characteristic of Caucasian borders. I have also seen Bulgarian towels decorated after the fashion of Anatolian rugs, to say nothing of Kurdish and Persian ones. Then many of the so-called Rhodian plates, as of the Turkish tiles of the sixteenth century, bear the bent and serrated lance-leaf of the *mabi* (fish) or Herat design. And as for that lozenge or spindle which the rug books call a pole medallion, there is no end to the repetitions of it I have come across—in rugs, in textiles, in embroideries, in the painted panels of rooms, on the tiled walls of tombs and palaces in Constantinople, wrought in iron for the enrichment of an Egyptian door, illuminated in miniatures or in manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, tooled on the covers of innumerable Arabic, Persian, and Turkish books, the oldest of which I have noted was bound in Baghdad in the eleventh century. And in New York, in the twentieth century, an American publisher reproduced it again for the cover of this book—from the back of a Persian mirror.

At the same time, no one who has not been in the East can realise the immense conservatism of Oriental peoples, their instinctive suspicion of anything foreign, or the extreme difficulty they still have in communicating with one another. And although some mystic law of association invariably causes that ample phrase “the Orient” to call up in western minds a picture of the tropics, the fact remains that wool rugs are primarily the product of cold climates. One should think twice, therefore, before adopting the theory that so characteristic a Persian design

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

as the spindle is derived from so exotic a plant as the lotus—especially when so competent an authority as Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole attributes the medallion as a system of ornament to the Sasanians. Neither is it likely that a palm could suggest very much to a man who never set eyes on one. Even the cypress is too much a friend of the sun to be very familiar to the highlanders of western Asia. I doubt, moreover, whether it is safe to identify the cypress with the Tree of Life, the “sacred Cocos tree,” and other mythic vegetables. The Mohammedan Tree of Life, or the *tuba* as Mr. Mumford correctly names it in a note, is of course an authentic specimen of the botany of design. But I question whether the weavers of Kerman ever thought about the *tuba* of the other world when they drew their delightful pots of flowers. And I am still more sceptical of Mr. Hawley’s naturalisation in Persia of Chinese symbols of connubial happiness. His pair of ducks on a famous rug in the Metropolitan Museum might perfectly be hens, pigeons, or poppinjays—or a heraldic device of the Mamelukes of Egypt.

As for the so-called pear pattern, that leaf-shaped or flame-shaped figure for which the rug books evolve so many fanciful origins, I know no more about it than they. But I do know that the Persians call it a *buteh*, meaning twig or bush, by which name they further designate the camel-thorn of their bare plains. And I have seen the same design on old Indian silks, as in photographs of a foliated Egyptian damask of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, of a Rhages jar of the thirteenth century, and of the tiles of the mosque of Sidi Okba in Kairuan, which were imported from Baghdad in the ninth century; while the Turks used to employ a similar motive in the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

guise of a cypress with a bent top. Only under the most serious reserves, therefore, should one countenance any legend of crown jewels, Hindu rivers, and what not. If the *buteh* represents anything at all—on which there is no reason to insist—it is probably a conventionalisation of some plant form, and far more ancient than the regalia of so modern a dynasty as that of the Kajars. In any case, these are questions not to be answered by rug pedlars or by gentlemen who have been three times to Tiflis. Having been there, myself, only twice, and then having pursued my investigations no farther than the railway station, I say no more!

I will say one word more, nevertheless, with regard to the future of Oriental rugs. This is a topic on which the rug books make most lugubrious prophecies, justly anathematising the use of aniline dyes and a suspicious tendency of this Asiatic craft to take on a European colour. For myself, I am less agitated about the aniline peril than about the other. But I recognise one or two points which the ladies and gentlemen of the rug books apparently ignore. The first of those points is one about which I have already said a little. Strong as is the instinct of Oriental weavers to go on repeating themselves indefinitely, there have always been individuals among them who were not averse to a novelty. Thus the so-called Isfahan carpets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to betray that European influence which was so strong at the court of Abbas Shah. The same thing sporadically occurs in places so far away from each other as Karabagh and Kerman, whose weavers appear to have found an irresistible attraction in the European treatment of the rose, so different from the usual Persian conventionalisation of

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

that flower. The Mongol and Turkoman kings of Persia may have had something to do with the former case, since Karabagh was for them a favourite summer resort, visited by many a European who brought presents from his own land. And freaks of design turn up every now and then from the most unexpected source—no doubt the whim of some Persian seigneur who happened to take a fancy to a European gimcrack.

One of the most unusual examples I ever saw was a rug which hung in our own house, considered by the Sah'b to be a Hamadan. This Hamadan, although properly knotted, and bearing a name and a date in Arabic letters, had the effect of a bit of French tapestry. Yet it looked as if it might have been designed after a picture by Francesco Guardi. It represented, distinguishably enough, St. Mark's basin and San Giorgio Maggiore, with gondolas and figures and suggestions of rococo drapery! The beauty of it, however, was the lovely Aubusson red of the ground, into which amazingly managed to dissolve a symphony of delicate blues. Such a piece, of course, is an extreme type. But it is a type of a thing which has happened in every art and every time.

Now the reason why this thing is happening in Persia to-day, happily on a far less subversive scale, is the very reason why so many interesting and successful rug books are being written. For the seigneurs who keep busy the looms of the East now live chiefly in the West. And that is why the simple old colours, which any Persian or Turkish child had an inimitable secret of combining, tend to refine themselves into the pastel shades of the Smyrna, Hamadan, and Sultanabad factories; why the complicated old designs run more and more to open grounds of a single tint; why

PERSIAN MINIATURES

we see fewer of those irregularities, both in colour and execution, which add charm to many a nomad rug; why dealers are driven to so many doubtful expedients for bleaching and toning. The truth is that most Americans do not like the rugs which most Persians prefer to weave. They are afraid of primary colours, and they are more afraid of their interior decorator, who tells them that no high-minded person puts into his house anything which does not match or complement everything else. They are afflicted, furthermore, with an incurable mania for what they are pleased to call antiques. Is it surprising, then, that they get what they want? Yet it is only fair to acknowledge what the West has done for this Oriental art, at a time when in the Near East taste and patronage are at their lowest ebb—in keeping up standards of design, colour, material, and craftsmanship. If it were not for us, everybody in Persia and Turkey would now be using aniline dyes and imitating staring European patterns.

The true danger lies in quite another quarter. While Persia has for centuries exported her carpets, the narrowing of the modern world has made it easy to exploit this commerce on so large a scale that the weavers can no longer sit for months and years over such carpets as they wove a hundred, two hundred, five hundred years ago. As it is, work requiring so much time and labour could not possibly be produced in western countries, save in excessively small quantities. Our standards of life are so different that an American workman of the skill required to weave a fine rug would require twenty or thirty times the wage with which a Persian is satisfied. It therefore pays to make rugs in Persia and export them to Europe and America—and will pay so long as the standards of

ABOUT RUG BOOKS

life remain in Persia what they are. But what if the standardising of the world should continue until the Persian no longer remained content with his mud house, his empty rooms, his simple pleasures? Then very few of us could afford to buy his rugs.

It may be, however, that the war of mankind will check the standardising of the world, will encourage independence and individuality and simple habits. So this most firmly rooted of Oriental habits may for a long time yet run no great danger of being changed. To prophesy with Dr. Lewis, at any rate, that "the Orient" is being "robbed of its fabrics and the Persian rug will have become a thing of the past" is pure nonsense. There is no more danger of the Persian rug becoming a thing of the past than the oil painting. The old masters will disappear, yes—save for connoisseurs of the largest means. But the secret of the Persian rug is by no means lost. It still lives, thank heaven, in millions of Persian fingers, to say nothing of Kurdish, Tartar, Turkish, and I don't know how many other ones. It lives so energetically that we can venture to wait for questions of taste, for questions of chemistry, even I hope for questions of economics, to settle themselves. And, here and there, under leisurely mud roofs, in spite of the craze for "antiques," in spite of the jeremiads of the rug books, there are being woven carpets quite as good as came from the looms of Abbas the Great. Nor do many of them get into the hands of buyers for department stores. In a hundred years, though, what prices people will pay for them—crying out on the degeneracy of their day, and the exquisite art of ours!

XIV

THE GRAMOPHONE

I have not made one complaint against Fortune, since I know she acts under compulsion.

The one thing which from time to time troubles me is my longing for Lahore.

Masud-i-Sad-i-Salman

AGRAMOPHONE, God wot, is a thing of horror. The scrape of its needle would be detestable enough to the ear, without its cheapness of imitation. And the seriousness with which millions of honest citizens listen to that screeching echo of an echo, calling it music, is a thing to stagger one's faith in mankind. For absolute music, that creative interlinking of sound and silence which the hand of genius can charm out of dead wood and metal, is what the wretched engine evokes least successfully.

And yet——! And yet what a thing it is that a living voice or an immortal violin can count on even so poor an immortality! And as the camera, whose unaided miracles are in themselves too literal to be engaging, has done so much for the study of art and for a dozen different kinds of comparative research, so the gramophone, or the phonograph, might be an invaluable note-book. I remember a spring day long ago on which I rowed from one to another of the gray monasteries which look out from

THE GRAMOPHONE

Mt. Athos to the Ægean Sea. To be strictly accurate, I myself did not row. A monkish-looking person did that, in a rusty black robe and a rusty black felt cap for all the world like a Persian *kola*, telling most unmonastic stories as he rowed. I lolled in the stern, enchanted now by him and now by a young Greek who sang in the bottom of the boat. The latter was a stone-cutter from Salonica who had been carving the marble gate of a monastery for his uncle the abbot. And having pocketed a pound or two for his handiwork, he lay on his back in the sun, between the boatman's feet and mine, singing a love-song of his people—so long, so quaint, so new to me and wild, that I thought I never should forget it. But I did, as I have forgotten the strange march I heard in the night at Kazvin, and the mad music of the Great Slaughter, and many a melancholy air that has made me walk more slowly past a tea garden. Whereas if I had only possessed one of those horns of mystery into which favourite opera singers bellow their favourite airs, I might have decorated this page with an outlandish enough array of minor notes.

Having pretended, however, that I would like to see myself a collector of folk songs, I must make one or two confessions. A symphony, it is true, is the form of art which upsets me more than any other—unless it be a string quartette. The kind couple who once took me to hear Strauss's "Tod und Erklärung" would have smiled to know what a new heaven and a new earth they opened for the most youthful of their guests. Nevertheless, I cannot deny it: I like an opera! It isn't because I prefer a living voice to a violin. For me an Amati rather than an Amato, except when it is too dark for any distracting

PERSIAN MINIATURES

image of a costume or of a self-consciousness or of a thirst for applause. The singers, though, are not the opera. That is something more complex, interwoven of music, colour, and drama. Not that the latter counts for anything by itself. Otherwise who could keep from snickering at the absurdity of an overfed tenor bawling "I love you!" at the top of his voice, or ordering a super in liquid roulades to shut the door? I may have heard "Aida," say, forty times, and to this day I haven't an idea what on earth it is about. A mere poetic flash of the human is all an opera should suggest, a pretty face, a gesture of despair, to warm the intertwining of sound and colour. It is a shameless polygamy of arts at best, but one—dare I admit it?—which in my time has been more potent than black coffee to keep me awake o' nights.

But the worst is that no man has thrown away more gramophone needles or used up more records than I! Why, do you suppose, is that? Well, it need not be because I like the scratch or the screech. It might be because any strong rhythm—a cook beating eggs, a train bumping over rail-ends, a Persian pounding a drum—makes something in me twitch. It might be because I can read both Dostoievsky and Jack London—or John Kendrick Bangs, if you prefer. It might be because I sometimes find quite as much profit in the artistic works of Messrs. Goldberg, Maurice Ketten, and Fontaine Fox as in the exhibitions of the Academy. In Hamadan it might be because we have precious few ways of amusing ourselves. And what did Kipling say about rafting a Broadwood up the Nile? Somebody rafted a Steinway up the Tigris safely enough for a missionary

THE GRAMOPHONE

friend of ours; but the last lap over the mountains from Khanikin landed at the unhappy recipient's door nothing but a wreck of matchwood and twisted wire.

A gramophone, however, if less portable than a banjo, might have made the poet sing a different song if he had been born a decade or two later. For it waits on no skilled plucker of strings to provide first aid for the caller, time for the dancer, and lightness for the leaden hour. Then a pile of records containing Caruso, Harry Lauder, and "Nearer my God to thee," is potent with ironic possibilities. And are they Memory and Torment? Are they Town? Are they all that ever went with evening dress? As to that I am no poet, alas, and I have a dinner jacket in my cupboard. I can only say that that abominable needle will scratch me away a wall and renew me a youth as uncannily as any sudden scent.

That poor old tottering sawhorse, now, the "Barcarolle": to opera goers and gramophone fiends there is only one "Barcarolle"! But why should it always make so much more vivid to me than flat-roofed Hamadan and white Elvend the gables of Dresden and the half-frozen Elbe? Do they still call the Café de Paris the Café de Paris, I wonder—where, in that winter after the resurrection of the "Tales of Hoffmann" from the archives of the burned Opera House at Vienna, an admirable little orchestra used to play the "Barcarolle"? Though it give comfort to the enemy I must swear that never have I eaten such cakes or drunk such coffee as in the Café de Paris in Dresden. Perhaps they tasted so because I was then living on lettuce and sour milk at a mad-house a little way up the river. Each Tuesday night we used to have a concert in that most enlivening of mad-houses, followed by a dance

PERSIAN MINIATURES

that ended at ten o'clock sharp—or was it nine? Impossible to find out now, even from a *Konversazionsdame*. There were two *Konversazionsdamen*—one blonde, who sat at the *Korpulententisch*, and one brunette, who sat at the *Magerntisch*. Their business was to converse with the maniacs and to introduce them one to another. There subsisted, of course, a bitter enmity between these ladies, so that if you danced with one you would be refused by the other. And you should have seen how beautifully the brunette *Konversazionsdame* waltzed with the Count from the *Korpulententisch*, when the orchestra played "Night of stars! O night of love!" As for me, I waltzed with the widow from Lodz. Poor dears! I wonder what has become of them all now.

"Mignon" also has hostile affiliations, of course; but a Frenchman wrote the score, and it never fails to take me back to that dirty old Teatro Rossini where I first heard it. I was very young then, and extremely poor, and didn't mind it a bit. So I used to go to the opera as often as I could afford ten or twelve cents for the top gallery, where the seats were not reserved and where if you arrived late you saw nothing. The night I first heard "Mignon" I arrived late. I therefore saw nothing. Nothing, that is, but one glimpse of somebody's long white hand, with a ruffle falling over it and a magnificent stage jewel sparkling on one finger. It was a man's hand, too, I fear. But when the gramophone scratches out "Kennst Du das Land," with an extra scratch every second because the record is cracked, it only sounds more like those Italian fiddles. It even smells like that stuffy Italian gallery, full of broad-brimmed black hats and fringed black shawls folded cornerwise.

THE GRAMOPHONE

Then Caruso: I am of such an antiquity that I happened to be on hand during his first American season, when he came to, saw, and conquered New York. I don't think I went to his first night. But I did go to his last one, when he sang "Lucia" if I remember correctly, and when in almost his final solo his voice cracked worse than any record, as I never heard his or anybody else's voice crack on the stage. And how we clapped him after it! And how in Hamadan we can listen to those thread-bare old Italian songs, hearing not them but all manner of queer things behind them from which time and distance shut us away!

Of all Italian songs none can be more threadbare than the *Miserere*, from "Il Trovatore." Yet the most ignoble confession I have to make is that I hide in the bottom of my heart a guilty love for it, compounded out of amusement at the senseless plot of the opera, which I have never fathomed and never want to, out of the killing way in which the tenor rushes out of prison to kiss his hand to the audience when the pack-thread duet is done, and out of some theory I used to have about its being more typically Italian than anything else; but chiefly out of the fact that it was the first opera I ever heard. I heard it in English, too, in Boston, and it ravished my innocent soul to the seventh heaven. However, there came a day, or rather a long succession of nights, when I used to lie in bed and hear the Grand Canal lap under my window. The sound of it, and of oars dipping between the dark palaces, was better than any opera. And so was the disembodied voice that sang one night, to the strum of a distant guitar, with a passion no tenor could pump out of a canvas dungeon, "*Non ti scordar! Non ti scordar di me!*"

PERSIAN MINIATURES

No, *caro mio*; I never shall, to my dying day. And if the day after that I find myself in a place half so heavenly as Venice on a summer night, and the golden harps sound in the least like a guitar on the lagoon, and the angels sing anything that begins to be so perfect a pattern of a lyric, I shall count myself not so badly off after all. And what has all this to do with Persia, or gramophones either? Very little, reader; very little. It is odd, though, how unexpectedly a leaden hour may be lightened, and how much of the quality of things lies outside themselves.



XV

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

*Whomever thou seest in the saintly garb,
Suppose him to be a wise man and a saint.*

PERSIAN PROVERB

IN PERSIA there are, with certain exceptions that prove the rule, no family names and no hereditary titles. Every gentleman is a Khan, that is, a landowner. Some of them, in truth, own very little land. Our cook had pretensions to being a Khan; and having divorced his first wife while both of them were in their teens, he took to his bosom an elderly descendant of the Prophet. His sons will wear green turbans and be called *Seid*. These people form, to be sure, a species of nobility. They are so numerous, however, and the pedigrees of most of them are so much more obscure than in Turkey or Arabia, that their credit is chiefly with the common people.

But no great personage and few small ones are without a title of a sort. Such titles carry no distinctions of degree

PERSIAN MINIATURES

and they are not hereditary. In a few princely houses they have a hereditary colour from the fact that the son is granted the title worn by his father. These resonant titles are glorified nicknames, really, bestowed by the Shah in reward for personal merit or services, and they thereafter take the place of the bearer's true name. The majority of them have in their flowery way a governmental flavour—as Sabre of the Dynasty, or Stability of the Realm. I have read of a small boy, son of a provincial chieftain, who was decorated with a patent as Tiger of the Sovereignty. A certain Captain Massakroff of Tehran is announced at court as Unique One of the Kingdom. A great lady may be Chastity of the State, Full Moon of the Dominion, Gaiety of the Dynasty, or simply Solace of the Eyes. A palace eunuch signs himself Magnificence of the Royal Intimacy! A professional man may earn the right to be known as Illustrious among the Physicians, or Sun of the Learned, or Adorner of the Monarchy. The last, if you please, is a painter of miniatures. Two famous artists of the Timurid period were the Pillar of the Painters and the Choicest of the Penmen. The name of the poet Bedi-al-Zaman of Hamadan, whose panegyric of his native town I quoted at the top of an earlier chapter, means Miracle of the Age. A citizen who made an address of welcome to the Shah was instantly dubbed Tongue of the Presence. And I have heard of a character in a comedy who was satirically honoured with the style of Uncleanness of Commerce. This is the tradition out of which sprang the nicknames Chief of the Desert and Prince All Alone, by which the Sah'b and I are known below stairs.

I have the honour to take lessons in Persian from the

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

Sea of Sciences. The Sea of Sciences is not, as you may suppose, a man in years. He might be thirty. He might be forty. At any rate, the taste of life is still sharp on his tongue. Nothing astonishes him more than that I do not take his advice and let a skilled barber of his race treat my hair, first with red henna and then with blue indigo, in order to hide the all too evident ravages imprinted upon me by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches; and I notice that he relishes a risqué story. His dark robe, however, his white turban, and his clipped round beard, are marks of the cult. Still, I do not gather that he belongs to the hierarchy of the church or the law. I take it that he is the natural product of a land in which learning has always worn the colours of divinity. His true place is among the *mirzas*—and not among those who are princes. In fact, the Sea of Sciences strikes me as being not quite a gentleman. He prefers to enter the house by the kitchen door. I think he likes to get the news from the cook—and perhaps a cooky. He has very much the air of being engaged in making his fortune. He should make a good one, with his quick wit, his sense of humour, his varied information, and the belief I seem to divine in him of the end justifying the means. But I must not give the impression that he has no manners. He always comes up to my study in his stocking feet, as an Oriental should, in order to preserve the house from the defilements of the street. Arrived at my door, he knocks—which is more than the servants can be counted on to do—he bows, he puts his hand to his heart, and he enters into the most complicated inquiries about my exact state of health. I likewise bow, I make a feint of putting an awkward hand on the place where a heart should be,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

I emit grotesque concatenations of plural nouns and singular verbs. The Sea of Sciences then lays off his *aba*, looks doubtfully at Jimmy, pokes the fire, and sets about teaching me Persian.

The beauty of this operation is that the Sea of Sciences knows not a syllable of English or any other European language, while I am acquainted with no word of Persian or Arabic. Neither of us, furthermore, owns such a thing as a grammar, a reader, or a dictionary. But the Sea of Sciences, they say, although he does not like to admit descent from a race considered by the Persians to be all that is gross and stupid, is of Turkish origin; and I have lived in Stambul—or as the Sea of Sciences prefers me to say, Islambol. There are many Turks, or Turkish-speaking people, in and around Hamadan—more than anywhere else in Persia except Azerbaijan. They belong to the Turkoman tribe of the Kara-Gozlu, the Black Eyed, which has pretensions to equal rank with that of the reigning Kajar. It surprised me not a little to find these people in Ecbatana, though I understood it better when I considered that the Turks had to cross Persia before they could get into Turkey, and that they must have begun doing so a long time ago. So long ago was it, however, that *Turki*, as the Sea of Sciences calls his dialect, and *Stambuli*, as he calls mine, are about as much alike as Spanish and Italian. Still, necessity is the mother of comprehension. Hence we succeed, partially, painfully, and even more darkly than is usual of human intercourse, in communicating one with the other. And the result is that I pick up a certain amount of *Turki*, if very little Persian.

For the learning of letters a book is not necessary, and least of all Arabic letters, which are written and printed in

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

the same way. When it came to the point of accustoming my eye to the look of letters in combination—and Arabic letters have a mystifying habit of changing their shape according as they fall at the beginning, the middle, or the end of a word—our lack of literature was supplied by a good missionary. She lent us a Gospel of St. John, in Persian. Now I must confess that I am not greatly given to searching the Scriptures. Perhaps it is because the heart of man is naturally depraved and desperately wicked. Perhaps because the feet of my youth were set so firmly on the strait and narrow path as to arouse in me a perverse latent inclination to stray among byways. At all events, the words of Holy Writ were too early familiar to me to wear any glamour of the unknown. But I have also to confess to a curious psychological reaction that took place in me when I began to spell out, haltingly as a kindergartener, under the keen black eye of the Sea of Sciences, the Persian sentence: "In the beginning was the Word . . ." It was, you know, as if I had never read that high word before. And I discovered that because the Sea of Sciences regarded the Gospel of St. John with a good deal of irony, I somehow became, if not its impassioned advocate, at least unwilling to take part against it. So far did I go to learn that though a man may be what is called a free thinker, no man can be free of the things that make him think as he does or escape the consequences of his birth! I saw myself, after all, a product of the tradition that accepts the Gospel of St. John. And for the first time in my life I began to look with an eye of sympathy upon that Hellenised Hebrew dreamer who was capable of writing: "In the beginning was the Word . . ."

PERSIAN MINIATURES

The Sea of Sciences entertains quite different ideas as to what was in the beginning. He was good enough to give me some account of his own ideas, and I found them not quite identical with those so poetically put forward in the Book of Genesis. It seems that what really was in the beginning was water, upon which floated the throne of the Creator. He began the work of creation by causing a dense vapour to rise from the water and subjecting the liquid remainder to a process of drying. This resulted in the formation of the seven-fold earth and its seven seas. The earth rested on the fin of a fish, the fish and its encircling element were supported by blocks of stone, those reposed on the back of an angel, the angel stood on a rock, and the rock was upheld by the wind.

These operations took place on Sunday and Monday, the first and second of April—in so much detail is it known to the Sea of Sciences what happened in the beginning. On the Tuesday mountains were added to the newly created earth, in order to increase its stability. Whence is it that earthquakes are rarer than they were in the beginning, when the movements of the fish bearing our world caused terrible commotions. The work of Wednesday was the invention of trees, plants, and all vegetable life. On the next two days did the Lord perfect his first rude sky of vapour, dividing it into seven heavens of which the first was green emerald—I quote from the Sea of Sciences—the second silver, the third red ruby, the fourth pearl, the fifth pure gold, the sixth topaz, the seventh and highest a firmament of burning fire, in which hover unscorched a myriad of angels singing the praise of God. And this firmament is so immense that although the angels stand with one foot enough higher than the

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

other for a man to need five hundred years to make the journey between them, their heads are yet far below the uppermost throne of the Most High. Beneath his throne God fixed a sea containing sustenance for all living beings. From time to time, the Sea of Sciences assures me, there is let down from the seventh heaven to the first such a quantity of water as is meted out to man for the irrigation of fields. God then gives orders to the winds to carry the water to the clouds above the earth, out of which it is sifted in the form of rain.

This work was completed on Friday, April sixth. Friday is called *Juma*, or union, because on that day the creation of the skies was united to that of the earth: whence also do the faithful make that day the one on which they unite in mosques for particular prayer. But what the Sea of Sciences failed to make quite clear to me is how the creation of man fitted into this calendar. It seems that before Adam there were jinn, created out of the fire of the seventh heaven, who were set upon the earth to guard it. They behaved in so unbecoming a manner, however, that one of their number, named Iblis, begged to be separated from the other jinn. He was accordingly named guardian of the first or emerald heaven, his former companions being scattered into space by the angels of the seventh heaven. And this preëminence of Iblis was the cause of his downfall, because pride had invaded his heart, as the Sea of Sciences pointed out to me. God in the meantime imparted to the angels his intention of creating another guardian of the earth, who should be his vicar there. The angels, hearing that the descendants of this new being would in turn cover the earth with blood and disorder, like the dispersed jinn,

PERSIAN MINIATURES

permitted themselves to express surprise that they should not rather be chosen, who spent their days in praising God and blessing him. Whereupon the Most High rebuked them, saying: "I know what is unknown to you." He then sent the archangel Gabriel to bring him from the earth a lump of clay out of which to mould the new being; but the earth protested in such alarm that Gabriel returned to the seventh heaven without fulfilling his mission. The same thing happened with the archangel Michael, the earth crying out: "I invoke God against thee if thou do me hurt." So Azrael, in turn, the dark angel of death, silenced the earth by replying: "God preserve me from ascending again to heaven without carrying out his command!" The clay which Azrael took back to heaven was of three kinds, white, red, and black, which God wrought with his fingers and then let lie for forty years. This, the Sea of Sciences tells me, is why the races of men are of different colours. For two more periods of forty years did the Creator allow the clay of the earth to lie inanimate, after kneading it with his hands. In the meantime he commanded the angels and Iblis to bow down before his new creation. The angels at once obeyed. As for Iblis, whose heart was filled with pride and envy, he refused, even contemptuously kicking the clay—he who was formed out of the fire of the seventh heaven. Wherefore was he cast out of his emerald heaven in disgrace until the Judgment Day. Then the Lord began to blow into the clay, which became limp and flexible as the breath of God entered every part of it. And Adam's first act of life was to sneeze.

The Sea of Sciences did not attempt to harmonise this account with his statement that the creation of Adam was

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

completed on the same day as that of the seven heavens. He went on to tell me the story of Eve, much as I had heard it before, adding that our first parents were put into Paradise on the third hour of that day, and that they stayed there no more than three hours. But those three hours, he explained to me, were equivalent to 250 years. The story of the Serpent was also like that of Genesis. When, however, I desired to know if the Serpent and Iblis were one, the Sea of Sciences was not quite certain. Yet he was able to inform me that the Serpent was expelled like Adam and Eve from the Garden, being sent to Isfahan, while Eve was removed to Jiddeh and Adam to Ceylon. Upon arriving there the latter had in the way of garments nothing but the leaves of Paradise. These soon dried in the hot sun of Ceylon, and the wind dispersed them in dust throughout India. Whence is it that that country abounds in aloes, cloves, musk, and every kind of spice and aromatic plant.

How long Adam and Eve were separated, the Sea of Sciences did not specify. But they were presently re-united at Arafat, the Place of Recognition, near Mecca, where great ceremonies are celebrated during the Feast of Sacrifice. It was after this meeting that Cain, Abel, and Seth were born. What was new to me was to hear that Cain and Abel had twin sisters, each of whom became the wife of the other's twin and so ensured the continuation of the race. As for Adam, he died at last on another Friday, the sixth of April, when he was 930 years old. Which is another reason why Mohammedans keep that day holy. And the Sea of Sciences assured me that these facts had first come down by direct revelation, and had then been handed on from generation to genera-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

tion by men of the most unimpeachable authority, so that there could be no manner of doubt about them. He did admit, though, that different authorities gave different versions of several of the details, adding piously: "God better knows the truth."

I know not whether it is the evident interest I betray in these matters, or a desire to implant sound doctrine, that leads the Sea of Sciences to tell me many more things about his beliefs and customs than you would have patience to hear. If a certain book of poetry downstairs in the library opened my ears to what he had to say about the seven seas, to say nothing of the seven heavens, I did not close them when he mentioned seven planets and the seven climates of earth subject to the same, each having a door by which one may penetrate into life, unlocked by mystic polygonal keys of which the first is a triangle and the seventh a nonagon. The seven doors are science, wealth, power, will, pity, wisdom, and—what? Experience? Common sense? I couldn't quite make out! I did make out, however, that Hamadan lies in the fourth climate. The Sea of Sciences further informed me that that name is derived according to some from the name of a great-grandson of Noah, and according to others from two Arabic words meaning All Knowing. For the rest, he flatters Hamadan no more than did old Bedi-al-Zaman. He is frank to say that out of our hundred thousand inhabitants—foreigners put the figure at twenty-five to seventy thousand—no more than forty or fifty are true Mohammedans, reading the Koran, shaving their heads, making their ablutions with due regularity, and then causing the water to run from the elbow to the fingers and not from the fingers to the elbow like those

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

heretical Turks. Of that other arch heretic the Caliph Yezid of Damascus, who caused the murder of the *Imam* Hosein, it is enough for the Sea of Sciences to tell me that he drank wine and habitually petted dogs. This with a glance over the shoulder at Jimmy, snoozing in front of the fire, who pricks up that quizzical ear!

Dim and divided as our councils are, they do not by any means run chiefly in channels of propaganda. The Sea of Sciences allows me to perceive that much as the Koran and the Traditions count for in true education, they are not enough. Nothing amuses him more than to hear that Omar Khayyam is supposed by the *Firengis* to be a poet of some consequence. Omar Khayyam, he assures me, was a mathematician, an astronomer, a philosopher, a lesser Avicenna. True, he wrote a few quatrains, but not enough of them to be considered a poet. Any one can write quatrains. Moreover, many of those ascribed to him are really by his master Avicenna, or others. And even Omar, he tells me, experimented in other forms. Shall I give an example I came across not long afterward in the "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society," translated by H. Beveridge?

"Yesterday I jested with Reason.
My heart wanted some explanations.
I said: 'O fulness of all knowledge,
I desire to ask you some questions.
What is this life in the world?'
He said: 'A sleep, or some dreams.'
I said: 'What is the result of it?'
He said: 'Headache, and some griefs.'
I said to him: 'What is marriage?' He said:
'Pleasure for an hour and irritation for years.'

PERSIAN MINIATURES

I said: 'What is the troop of oppressors?'
He said: 'Wolves, dogs, and some jackals.'
I said: 'What will tame this sensual soul?'
He said: 'When it has got some buffets.'
I said to him: 'What are Khayyam's writings?'
He said: 'Wrong calculations and some frenzies.'"

That, at any rate, should prove to a misguided world that Fitzgerald had something to do with his poet's fame. Why, as the Shah said anent this very matter to Sir Mortimer Durand, I myself——! Of the greater poets named to me by the Sea of Sciences, he evidently thinks most highly of Sadi and Firdeusi. The sayings of the former are forever in his mouth, to point all morals and to adorn all tales. As for Firdeusi, I learn that he is the true and only historian of his country. On the authority of the *Shah Nameh* do I hear that Jamshid, and not the great-grandson of Noah, was the actual founder of Hamadan, as of Persepolis and Tus. This Jamshid seems to have been the originator of pretty nearly everything else in Persia, including plaster, baths, tents, seal rings, New Year's Day, and the pearl fisheries of the Persian Gulf. He reigned seven hundred years and he had two famous ministers, one of whom was a Jew and one a Greek. The name of the latter, if you please, was Pythagoras. To him do the Persians owe the sciences of music and astronomy. When I expressed surprise that a Persian king should have unbelieving viziers, the Sea of Sciences reminded me with a tolerant smile that Jamshid himself was an unbeliever. None the less did Jamshid hesitate to authorise the use of wine, even in those irreligious days, until one of his wives was cured of a fever by a sip of Shiraz. But what pleased me as much as anything was a wonderful tur-

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

quoise cup of Jamshid's, found long ago at Persepolis, containing a liquor capable of too many magic things for me to name.

I am too ignorant to know how widely read the Sea of Sciences may be in the sacred book of the Arabs and in the classic poets of his own country. But, as I make it out, learning with him stops there. Being myself a persistent spoiler of paper I am the quicker to note that if I were a Persian, and even so clever a one as Hafiz, I might have to wait four or five hundred years before the Sea of Sciences would be ready to take cognisance of me. If I were not a Persian I fear he would never take cognisance of me at all. In that he is quite like a fellow-citizen of Sophocles or Pindar. The only Europeans he has heard anything about are Alexander the Great, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. Shall I add William II? The Sea of Sciences seems to be aware of the existence of some such personage. But that vague region without the pale of the faith means very little to him—beyond the fact that certain dwellers in it called Russians, and certain others called Englishmen, who seem to be the Kurds and the Lurs of *Firengistan*, are more redoubtable than the rest of us. He was stupefied to learn that an ocean wider than Persia rolled between my corner of *Firengistan* and the Sah'b's, and that I disclaimed any relationship whatsoever with the mythical William. Yet the Sea of Sciences is not without his curiosities. Several of them concern his pupil. I neither teach nor trade, as do most *Firengis*. I spend much of my time in front of a mysterious clicking mechanism that periodically rings a bell. Nothing pleases the Sea of Sciences more than to hear that bell ring. But why do I ring it? Why do I take photographs?

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Why do I separate myself from my family? Why do I spend long months in Stambul, and others in Hamadan? Why do I ask so many questions? There is evidently something queer about a man who leaves his own country and wanders in those of other men.

Nevertheless, I found out, the Sea of Sciences is a traveller himself. And what ears I pricked up when I heard it! And how sharply I saw again the fantastic picture we made of East and West sitting together over a Persian Gospel of St. John! But nothing is more impossible than to get out of the Sea of Sciences any exact details of his voyages. Maps are to him unknown. The points of the compass are useful only in finding the direction of Mecca. He has been there, it seems, no less than three times. Yet he does not wear the coveted title of *Hajji*; for each one of the three pilgrimages has been performed at the expense and on the account of another. The Sea of Sciences is *Meschedi* only. Is he very discreet, I wonder, or is he like a sailor, that he has so little to tell me about his travels? By mere accident do I learn that the waters of the Tigris are a powerful anaphrodisiac, cooling the unholy desires of men and stopping the neighing of horses. Unless used in moderation, however, they cause the skin to shrivel up and the drinker to fall into a decline. What seems to have made the profoundest impression upon the Sea of Sciences are the electric lights of Bombay. For like Sindbad the Sailor he has sailed out of Basra, and in an English ship like Conrad's *Patna* has he, with other pilgrims of an exacting faith, crossed the Indian Ocean. He is ready to admit that the English, as well as the Russians, are up to a trick or two beyond the Kurds and the Lurs. But his adventures have not kindled in him

THE SEA OF SCIENCES

any sympathy toward those enterprising neighbours of Persia.

The Sea of Sciences one day broke to me the news that he would have to discontinue our lessons. An old lady had died and left in her will a provision that her body was to be buried in the holy soil of Kerbela. He, being known for an experienced traveller, had been chosen to take it there; and having done so he was to perform his fourth pilgrimage to Mecca—this time, again, in the name and for the credit of the old lady. Before he got ready to start, however, the war had broken out. Nothing could have delighted him more. He solemnly warned me that I would now see what would happen. England and Russia would both be destroyed. But the builders of the Baghdad railway might have been surprised to hear him add the prophecy that a man would come out of the East who would raise Persia to her old place as mistress of the world. And then all the Christians, he assured me, would be forced to turn Mohammedan or to leave the country.

After all, can you blame him? But do you know? I would give the eyes of my head to find out whether the Sea of Sciences really went to Mecca—or whether he perhaps took lessons in German!

XVI

WILD BOAR

Valentin était un saint prêtre. L'Empereur Claude se le fit amener, et lui dit: "Pourquoi donc, Valentin, ne t'acquiers-tu pas notre amitié en adorant nos dieux et en renonçant à tes vaines superstitions ?"

Téodor de Wyzewa: LA LEGENDE DORÉE

I have heard it stated that "hunting is a business for the idle"; but those who really understand are aware that hundreds of secrets for the government of kingdoms are hidden in this art.

Colonel P. M. Sykes: THE GLORY OF THE SHIA WORLD

I

IF THE eye of some honest Nimrod, stranded on a desert island or in a snoring country house, with nothing better than this book to beguile a bore-some hour, should brighten at sight of this chapter— But why should I, for my part, spoil my chapter by telling the end at the beginning, or hint what was so far from being the case, that we came home with an empty bag?

The head and front of that boar hunt was the Sah'b, who had seen a boar hanging up in the Bazaar to seduce the eye of some corrupt Christian, who had found out that it came from the region of Erzamfud, who made up a party for a three-day expedition to that village, who on the appointed morning routed two members of the squad out

WILD BOAR

of sick-beds, and who engaged a *charvadar* and his mules to carry our kit. It is one thing, however, to engage a *charvadar* and his mules, and it is quite another for a *charvadar* and his mules to turn up at the promised time. So it was that the commissariat, under the delighted command of Habib, failed to get under way before lunch. And it was three o'clock of a short February afternoon before the rest of us started on our twenty-five-mile ride.

Lo, how lightly I say it, reader! I say it with a disengaged air, as if to make you believe your scribe a cavalier born. But truth compels me to whisper in your ear that I never expected to come back alive from that boar hunt: not because I expected to fall like Adonis under the tusk of a boar, but because I expected to fall off my horse and break my neck. For I had never ridden twenty-five miles in my life—or not since I was fifteen, which is practically the same thing. However, in Persia you either ride or you stay at home. There is no other way to get about—off the two or three highways in that whole huge country which are fit for wheels. So, as I would rather have broken my neck than stay at home, I rode Bobby. In his salad days Bobby was a man-eater. Next to running away, the best thing he did was to catch a groom in a corner of a stable yard and squash him against a wall. But, like many another hard character, Bobby had reformed in his old age, having turned into quite the most exemplary horse in the world. And not only did his sleek sides give evidence of what nourishment must be in man, but he was in more than one way the most dependable of his companions. The Sah'b's horse, for instance, was a more debonair little beast, with a strain of Arab in him; but he was quite used

PERSIAN MINIATURES

up by the time we got to Erzamfud. An even handsomer horse was the one ridden by the Beau Brummel of our party—a big black brute with a magnificent flying tail and a nasty trick of throwing his head up where you could least manage him. Another big horse was the gray ridden by the Soldier. He was not a soldier then. He was an Irishman, being part of the time an accountant; and nothing would have surprised him more than to be told that a year from that day he would be hunting not boar in Persia but Boches in France. And perhaps you will not mind if I am simple enough to add that the Somme will always wear for me a different colour because I knew one out of the many soldiers who lie upon its banks. Then there was—Adonis shall I call him, the youngest of our crew, whose horse fell under him so many times that afternoon but who came home ungored by any boar? And there was also Askar, the groom, an impressive-looking person with a purple moustache and with a brass plaque, set in front of his black *kola*, of which he was inordinately vain, who divided with Beau Brummel the honour of knowing the way.

As it turned out, neither of them knew it too well. A country looks very different under snow from what it does at other times, and we veered not a little out of our course. Yet I, for one, did not mind. A boar hunt was an adventure entirely new to me, and I had been in Persia too short a time for the strangeness of it to have worn off. We started southward into the easterly foot-hills of Elvend, which is a range as well as a single peak. The road was first the familiar one, lined by bare poplars and willows and well broken out, which runs from Hamadan to the village of Fakhireh—otherwise Boast or

WILD BOAR

Glory! After that we found ourselves in a wilder and more treeless region, riding up and up long slopes of snow to another flat-roofed village, on top of a hill. I think I could count on my fingers the days I spent in Persia when no sun was to be seen. This looked as if it were going to be one of those days; and every now and then a flurry of snow came down out of the windless gray sky. There was something about it, in those wide white spaces, that for no particular reason reminded me of my first sight of the Persian highlands. There were, at any rate, views to be looked at from the top of that white hill.

We dropped down the farther side into another valley of bare poplars. The village sprawling among them was of a kind I had not seen before, in that the houses were built of gray stone. Children were playing on the flat roofs, not so far above our heads, and around a big pool in the centre of a small square. The trees stood so closely around the houses, and the slim lines of them contrasted so pleasantly with the heavier and more irregular lines of the garden walls, and behind the walls were so many of those snow humps which mean a vineyard, that I at once made up my mind to go back to that village in the spring and rent a gray stone house for a cent a day and write the Great American Novel. There were any number of streams there, too, gurgling in and out of the ice that sheathed their borders with that sound which is so different from the gay splash of summer.

The largest of those streams was quite a river, which we followed for a little time. Presently we crossed it by a viaduct rather like the knife-edged bridge of Al Sirat, over which the faithful pass into Paradise—unless they plunge into the Bottomless Pit. It was a single narrow

PERSIAN MINIATURES

plank, perilously icy, which I never would have dreamed of trying to navigate on foot, much less on horseback, if I had been alone. As it was I gave Bobby his rein, and over my ex-man-eater marched as unconcernedly as if that slippery lath had been Brooklyn Bridge. Such is it to have had a past, and to have wormed your way out of many a tight corner. A real tight corner was a ledge to which we next came. From Bobby's back it looked about three inches wide, and that strip of glare ice slanted from the rocky wall on one side of it toward the small precipice on the other. Nevertheless, we all got over safely except Adonis, who dashed down the precipice with his nag. But the drop, luckily, was not so mortal as it sounds; and as Adonis had the quick wit to step out of his stirrups as he went down, neither of them got anything worse than a jolt.

We now had to climb a gully that stood up in front of us like the side of a house. The deep snow of the trail had been so little broken by other travellers that the horses had double work. I can't quite say that Bobby took it like a bird; but being a Persian horse he had been badly brought up to gallop up hill, and being an eater of hills as well as of men he got to the top long before his companions. There I gave him time to get his breath, while he gave me time to admire the magnificent view. The most striking thing about it was that the white valleys through which we had come were bluer than the Mediterranean. Even the plain of Hamadan that opened out beyond them was less silver than violet, touched here and there by the stray gold of a sun that was invisible to us. The dark masses of houses in the valleys, the vertical lines of poplars, were all but lost in

WILD BOAR

the intensity of blue shadow. Above them, as far as we could see—and one can see very far in that clear Persian air—there was nothing to break the long, flowing lines of the snowy landscape. The accent of it all, on that gray day of snow, was very different from the warmth of the plain of Kazvin as I first looked down on it from a break of the Elburz mountains; but the elements were really the same, and what I shall always remember as most characteristic of the look of Persia, made up of pure line and colour. Beautiful as trees are, and much as we always missed them, the absence of them makes for an effect of simplicity, of nobility, not to be found in the romantic confusion of a wooded country.

From that second hill, higher, lonelier, and barer than the first, we slid down into a second valley, containing a gray stone village of its own, called Simin. The sudden descent upon them of five *Firengis* caused an immense commotion in Simin, whose ragged inhabitants crowded around to stare at us in the dusk. It was now six o'clock and nobody knew just how far we still had to go. Some people said one *farsakh*. Other people said two *farsakhs*. In our hearts we thought it might very well be five *farsakhs*. So we induced one of the inhabitants of Simin to guide our guides for the rest of the way. He forthwith put on a sleeveless sheepskin jacket, mounted a woolly pony, and led us down a villainous river road that was continually crosscut by gullies of varying depth. The unhappy Adonis came another cropper in one of them—on top of his horse, I hasten to add—and as usual neither horse nor rider broke a leg, as might well enough have happened.

There wasn't a sign of a trail to us who didn't know it.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Nevertheless, the man from Simin presently informed us that we were not to mind the wolf tracks we saw in the snow, as we were seven and well armed. Do you fancy I am about to treat you to a tale of the kind that came into my head upon the interpretation to me of this interesting news, by some admired if anonymous author of my youth, describing how skaters on frozen rivers, or drivers in Russian forests, would throw back coats, hams, or haply the least popular of their own number, to delay the pursuing pack? Alas, our hams, if we had any, were with Habib and the *charvadar*, of whom we had seen no sign and who were perhaps already eaten up themselves. And having been bred up to tell the truth on all occasions save when it will degrade or incriminate me, I am obliged to confess that nothing more thrilling happened than a sudden outburst of barking from the dogs of an all but invisible village. We just made out its cubic shadow on a dim hill above us. The man from Simin advised us not to go any nearer to it, as village dogs at night are worse than wolves. But as he felt the need of a little counsel with regard to the route he should follow, he proposed to engage another guide, from that same village! To that end he began bawling at the top of his voice. Whereupon the dogs barked more savagely than ever. Then answering shouts faintly replied to the man from Simin, out of the dark hill town, where not a light was to be seen. After a long interchange of stentorian civilities which I bitterly regretted not being able to understand, it transpired that the shouter in the village had no mind to guide the man from Simin at so late and chill an hour. But he gave copious instructions as to the whereabouts of Erzamfud, to which the man from Simin listened with

WILD BOAR

attention. Then he led us into a dark and devious valley with the reassuring remark: "It will be a good thing if we don't get lost."

The rest of the way was a kind of arctic dream. It was bitterly cold; and as we rode single file after the man from Simin, through a country as ghostly and strange as the North Pole, we somehow seemed to have exhausted those founts of conversation which had been so lively earlier in the day. Beau Brummel and Adonis, to be sure, having been born on the shores of the Mediterranean, gave utterance to their emotions. As for me, I was not too numb to note anew that interesting difference between the races of the north and of the south, which the former are somewhat too quickly given to construe as a difference in endurance. As a matter of fact, who can endure more, when it comes to the point, than a vineyard tiller of the Mediterranean? But he never loses his power of saying what he thinks about it, whereas we perhaps embitter the sorrows of our hearts by considering it bad form to give them voice. What interested me more, however, were certain strange flashes that occasionally illuminated the gray clouds. The thing looked exactly like the periodical flare of Sandy Hook, before Sandy Hook itself is visible, as you come in from the ocean at night. But as there could not possibly have been a lighthouse or a search light nearer than Baku or Baghdad, and as it was not the time of year, with a thermometer somewhere around zero, for thunder-storms, I suppose that flash must have been from some stray Aurora Borealis—in a latitude of Biskra, Charleston, and Los Angeles.

As we stumbled on we struck into what was evidently a better travelled road than the one we had been follow-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

ing. Patches of trees began, too, to darken the snow, the sound of ice-bound water filled the white night, the horses instinctively quickened their pace, and at last the dogs of Erzamfud barked in front of us. To have as little to do with them as possible, we made across a field of deep snow for the house of a person known to the Sah'b, on the lower edge of the village. How we found the slit of an alley below that house I don't know, though I do know that we had some trouble in attracting the attention of our hosts. However, a shutter presently opened above a black arch, a woman looked out, a man came down with a lantern, and we discovered that we were not too frozen to tumble off our horses. Then we followed the lantern into the arch, through a tunnel so low that we had to stoop to get through it, into an inner court, and up some steep, slippery stairs to a loggia with rooms opening out of three sides of it. And we no longer considered it good form to keep our sorrows to ourselves when we heard that neither Habib nor our provisions had yet turned up. Nor can I truthfully report that the most poignant part of our sorrow was any fear lest Habib, the *charvadar*, and the mules had been eaten up by the wolves who had been good enough to spare the impure *Firengi*.

In the middle of the room set apart for our entertainment stood a big *kursi* which did not a little to console us. I can assure you we lost no time in getting off leggings and boots as fast as numbed fingers could undo them and sticking our legs under the quilt of that blessed *kursi*. And no sooner had the grateful warmth begun to thaw us out than Habib arrived with the wherewithal for a magnificent dinner. While he was getting it ready we had time to look about. Our room was, I suppose,

WILD BOAR

the best in the house, for it was of good size and it overlooked the slit of an alley—by a shuttered door that hadn't a sign of a rail or a bar to keep an unwarned newcomer from stepping off into space. There were two other doors, one leading into the loggia and one into an inner store-room. Window there was none. There were, however, two holes in the roof, whose rafters of poplar trunks were black with soot. Above the rafters I could make out smaller transverse beams, filled in with twigs and camel-thorn; and on top of the camel-thorn, of course, lay two or three feet of good thick mud. The walls and the floor were also of mud, though there were rugs for us to sit on. But besides the *kursi* and the fireplace where Habib squatted at his sauce pans, there was not a stick of furniture. Our dinner, when it was ready, we ate off the top of the *kursi*. And good as that dinner was, it had the special savour of picnic fare, in that smoky mud room of a Persian village, which I would not have exchanged for any Ritz restaurant in Christendom.

By the time we had finished dinner and emptied the samovar it was ten o'clock, and we could scarcely keep our eyes open. So some of us went to bed under the *kursi*, and others of us rolled up in our blankets, expecting to fall instantly into a stupor which nothing on earth could break till it was time to start out on the serious business of our expedition. But we reckoned without our host, as the saying goes—or without the cat of our host. I suspect the *kursi* had something to do with it, too. At any rate, our dormitory was the family living room, out of which the family had turned in our favour; and however politely they concealed their feelings with regard to our invasion, the family cat was not reconciled to the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

presence of strangers. Having affairs of her own in the inner room, she kept going back and forth all night between that room and the loggia. The beauty of this operation was that both doors were closed and locked. Being Persian doors, however, they were double, though not quite so pretty as the painted ones from a palace in Isfahan which you may see in the Metropolitan Museum; and they fitted so badly that by pressing against the bottom of one leaf that wretched cat could wriggle through, making an immense clatter as she did so. Every time she squeezed in or out somebody woke up and threw a boot at random, which generally hit somebody else's head. Then poor Beau Brummel, who was one of the two to be dragged from their beds of pain upon this pleasure party, had a turn and required succour. At half-past two, accordingly, we all sat up and had a general confab, to say nothing of another round of refreshments. And the pleasantest thing about it was to look out of the holes in the roof and see a star or two give promise of a pleasant day for the boar hunt.

II

After that fantastic night I don't know whether we would have got up at all if half the village hadn't followed the example of the cat and broken in upon us. They admired us while we performed a somewhat sketchy toilet and consumed the far from sketchy breakfast improvised by the accomplished Habib. This was the worse half of Erzamfud, of course, and it constituted the force of beaters with which we, or all of us but the unhappy Beau Brummel, at last set forth, under the most brilliant of Persian suns, to track the wild boar to his snowy lair.

WILD BOAR

The hills were full of them, the villagers swore, and they warned us against killing more than we should be able to carry home.

Again, reader, do syllables fall trippingly from my tongue, against which you are to be warned. I set forth with the others, it is true. Like them I jibbed at crossing a river on a succession of tree trunks coated with ice, to the vast amazement of the beaters in preferring to hop from boulder to icy boulder of the stream. With them I tramped into the mouth of a ravine of unbroken snow, whose crust was just thick enough to let you in to your knee at the instant the ball of your foot was bent for the next step. But I blush to confess that before we had gone up that ravine a mile I caved. I caved because I had not yet got acclimated to the air of those high places, which makes the newcomer's legs lag beneath him, which causes him to puff at the least exertion, which gives him cracking headaches when he least wants them, and which in Erzamfud, a thousand feet or two above Hamadan, brought upon me the faintness that had lost me a shoe in the pass of Sultan Bulagh. So, in order not to hold the others up, I dropped after all out of the hunt, and ploughed shamefacedly back like a fainéant through the snow to Erzamfud.

I found Erzamfud, such of it as had not gone boar hunting, squatting half naked in the sun, engaged for the most part in the more intimate pleasures of The Chase. In Hamadan I had grown more or less used to seeing bare legs in snow. Here, however, there were no exceptions whatever to that simple rule of life, and everybody was more or less décolleté. But though this is supposed to be the coldest part of Persia, it was surprising to find how

PERSIAN MINIATURES

comforting the sun could be. Under it Erzamfud sat very picturesquely in its silver valley, beside its ice-choked stream, with poplars pricking up darkly here and there against the snow.

As I mooned about with my camera, still feeling a bit shaky and more than a bit conscious of my unworthiness as a representative of the huntsmen of *Firengistan*, I ran into Beau Brummel and Askar. They were on their way to pay the horses a visit, so I went along, too. We found Bobby and his friends stowed away in such a stable as they had no doubt put up in many times before. It was a sort of cellar without a crack of a window in it, as dark and as hot as Ethiopia and as aromatic as I don't know what. Certainly much more so than Araby the Blest. And I believe Askar had breathed that air all night. At any rate, Beau Brummel and I left him there, after patting certain warm muzzles and feeling of sundry pairs of tired legs. Then, catching sight of a loom through an open door on the opposite side of the street, we were indiscreet enough to poke our heads through the door. Whereupon some ladies who were weaving at the loom promptly threw a pair of scissors at us.

I, who have long been imbued with a sense of the distress caused to feminine sensibilities in Mohammedan lands by the intrusion of man, interpreted the scissors as a hostile demonstration. Beau Brummel, however, more adept than I in the dark politics of the sex, and an older Persian though a much younger habitué of this curious planet, read the omens otherwise. He informed me that the ladies of the loom would be highly insulted if we did not respond to so complimentary an overture by returning the scissors and making them a present or at least pat-

WILD BOAR

ting their cheeks. And he forthwith proceeded to conform to the etiquette of the country after the latter of the two methods he had outlined to me. Incidentally he reminded me that it was St. Valentine's day! But I, being no Beau Brummel, and having a little change in my pocket, concluded that that might be more acceptable as a tribute from an elderly intruder.

Having expressed our appreciation of the handiwork of these coquettish weavers by several hawkings, *molto con espressione* as musicians say, of the words *khaili khub*, which mean "very good," we withdrew—into the arms of the master of the house. "Now we are in for it!" thought I to myself, seeing more vividly than ever the contrast between our course of dalliance and that of our harder companions. But what we were in for was a seat under a *kursi* in another part of the house, and several glasses of not very inviting looking tea, to say nothing of those hard, bright sweets which are an inseparable part of Persian hospitality. If our host had his own view of the episode of the scissors, he kept it to himself. One reason, perhaps, was that Beau Brummel in days far gone by had ordered of him and had partly paid for three rugs, which on completing our host had sold to some one else; and he kept asking Beau Brummel in the most affable way in the world if Beau Brummel were angry with him. He was a middle-aged gentleman with whom blue was evidently the favourite colour. He wore a blue turban, a blue beard, and blue hands—into both of which he took ours upon greeting us and upon bidding us adieu. He was a quaint mixture of the fairy story and of the sonnet. It filled me with despair that I had no tongue to ask him a thousand things I wanted to know:

PERSIAN MINIATURES

as, for instance, exactly how he dyed the wool for his wives' rugs, and whether his hands were always blue or whether they and his beard and his turban were sometimes yellow or green.

When at last we succeeded in getting out from under Blue Beard's *kursi* we went back to our own. But we found it so much less tolerable than last night, thanks to the smudge of *tapeh* that warmed it, and the windowless room was so stuffy and dismal on so sunny a morning, that Beau Brummel, out of his greater experience, suggested a move to the roof. There, accordingly, we carried rugs, pillows, and books, and there was revealed to me an entirely new phase of Persian life. I had seen, of course, that most of the roofs in Persia are flat, but I had not taken in the fact that people live on them and even use them as thoroughfares, passing from house to house without the inconvenience of descending into the muddy street. The cat who had destroyed our night dozed near us in the sun, with one eye open for an indiscreet neighbour of a watch-dog. The height of her infamy was that she wasn't a Persian cat at all, but a plain, short-haired tabby who might have been born anywhere. Hens picked busily about, and occasionally were shooed squawking across the narrow chasm of the street. Ladies who were not too particular about concealing their charms eyed us in rows; children played tag from roof to roof; a few men came to talk to us. One of them was Blue Beard. Perhaps he wanted to be sure where we were. But when it finally became apparent that no amount of shouting could make us understand more than half a dozen Persian words, Erzamfud left us to our own devices.

I remember it as a part of that Persian picture that

WILD BOAR

Beau Brummel told me about a windmill belonging to an uncle of his, not a windmill like the one at the factory, but a stone one with arms sweeping just clear of the ground, and how he once spent certain early spring days on top of it, looking out on the blue strait between the mainland of Asia Minor and the island of Mytilene, building fires of driftwood to keep himself warm, and reading books I had never associated with a Beau Brummel. He told me, too, about that blue strait, in which he had often sailed and of which the Greek fishermen say the crosswinds and crosscurrents clash so fiercely that they strike sparks. So will even the modern Greek poetise the phosphorescence of his native seas. And I nearly fell off the roof for laughing over a story Beau Brummel told me about a duel he had tried to fight with an elderly scientist. I need not betray to you the cause of that unsuccessful duel. Have duels ever more than one cause? Out of the cause of this one Beau Brummel, who had yet to see his twenty-fifth birthday, made me copy for a three-volume novel. Who knows? I might write it some day—in that valley of stone houses and poplars and vineyards and running water. At any rate, Beau Brummel showed me, on our Persian roof, a gold charm with initials on it not his own, and the mystic words *attendre pour atteindre*. And he said what few Anglo-Saxons of his years would have said, at least to so much of a stranger as I, that there are times when one wants to get away from one's own life, and that he liked Persia because of its simplicity. I often thought of that afterward. I still think of it, when I hear people rail at the ignorance of the East and the peril of its low standard of life. After all, is it a low standard of life to be

PERSIAN MINIATURES

content with a little, to be able to endure much, and to know that happiness, if it exists, lies not in things? However, I thought then how many different kinds of people there are in the world, and how good it is, though how disgusting to be of a kind subject to fits instead of the kind that can start out on a boar hunt seven or eight thousand feet above the sea and go through with it. Then the intense blue of the sky gradually paled, filmed over with an impalpable gray, and at last snow began to fall again, powdering us all over as we made up a little of the sleep we had lost in the night.

It was Habib who finally got us off the roof, saying that the boar he had expected to roast for lunch was not yet arrived and that he had consequently made other things ready for us. While we were eating them, not thinking how much better they were than we deserved, the hunting party came back—more dead than alive. When I left them the snow was up to our knees. They went on till it was up to their waists; and then, having floundered this way and that as the villagers guided them, those egregious villagers announced there was too much snow this winter for hunting and they would better come back in April or November. And it was at least some consolation to me for having made a fool of myself twice in three months that they had neither shot a boar nor so much as seen the track of one, though wolf tracks they had crossed in plenty.

As for the hunters, they were at first past consolation. But after lunch on top of the *kursi*, and after changing into dry clothes, they revived enough to make up their minds that we would all be happier without the *kursi*. Mine host was vastly surprised at this fresh manifesta-

WILD BOAR

tion of the madness of the *Firengi*. However, he removed the quilt and its wooden frame from over the fire-hole in the mud floor, carted away every vestige of *tapeh* smouldering therein, and was perfectly willing to sell us all the poplar wood we wanted to burn in the fireplace. What heat didn't go up the chimney, of course, disappeared through the two chinks in the roof and through the cracks of those famous doors. Still, we all felt better for having the aroma of Persia removed from under our noses..

By this time the indefatigable Sah'b was ready to put off his character of Nimrod and put on that of connoisseur of rugs. To that end he proposed that the looms of Erzamfud be inspected. And we began in our own house, in another room of which, downstairs, some women were working at a big carpet in front of another *kursi*. They knotted busily away, safely facing their loom, while an old lady came and went in a red-and-yellow-figured *chader*, very careful to hold the edges of it between her teeth but not at all solicitous about her bare legs. A poor wretch of a man hovered in the outskirts of the company, his head tied up in a dirty white cloth. They told us he had been kicked in the jaw by a horse. A baby or two howled in a corner, alarmed by the visitors who kept crowding in to stare at the strangers. We soon retired in their favour, escorted by the master of the house and by a *mirza* of the Sah'b's who had opportunely turned up from Simin.

If you want to know what a Persian village is like, you will see something by lying on a roof; but you will see more by inspecting looms. There were looms in nearly every house of this village—and outrageous looms most

PERSIAN MINIATURES

of them were, the wooden uprights being made of such crooked tree trunks, and the cross-pieces of such crooked branches, that we did not wonder at the crookedness of some of the rugs. What was more surprising was to find how much straighter certain of the rugs on such looms were than others on the straightest looms of all. Once or twice the Sah'b, who had more to say about it than you might think, because he had agreed to buy all the rugs woven in Erzamfud during a term of years, made the weavers rip out I don't know how many square feet of what they had woven. And in one house he pointed out to me the difference between two kinds of wool the women were using. The weavers were all women and girls, I might add: never a man in this region stoops to so soft a craft, as they do in other provinces. Some of this wool was much duller and stiffer than the rest, and when the Sah'b taxed them with having shorn it from a dead sheep, they could not deny him. One reason for these shortcomings might be that in Erzamfud they had not long been weaving rugs of any such size as many of those we saw, having always made what the Persians call a *do-zar*. This, as I have already said, is a two-yard—though a *zar* is really thirty-nine inches. A two-yard, the Sah'b told me, costs in the Bazaar of Hamadan when it is new and not of too good a quality perhaps sixteen *tomans*, of which the wool, the dye, and the thread for the foundation would cost not less than twelve. It would take a woman about four months to weave, if she kept strictly at it, and for her four months' work she would be satisfied to get back a pittance more than what she spent for the materials, counting her time and her maintenance in her own house as things hardly to be paid for.

WILD BOAR

Wherever we went we found the weavers working from a *vagireh*, a piece cut out of an old rug, and not from the painted patterns they use in the factory at Hamadan. This vandalism scandalised me in the highest degree; but it taught me, after all, how common rugs are in Persia, and how little anybody thinks it necessary to sentimentalise about them. I saw more of them lying on the mud floors of hovels that afternoon than hanging on looms. To an ignoramus like myself, too, it was quite a lesson in design to be told of the figure on one half-finished rug that it went by the name of the lily or of the henna flower, and of a prettier pattern of open blossoms in a loose white lattice that it was one of the oldest designs in Persia, named after one Mina Khan. But who that Mina Khan may have been nobody knows—and least of all the gentlemen who write rug books, though they confidently name him a ruler of western Persia. The specialty of Erzamfud, however, is the *buteh*, that decorative little figure with a bent point, so common on the shawls of Kerman, which Europeans call the pear pattern, the pine pattern, and a thousand other things. Erzamfud is famous, too, for its beautiful red dye, which is a sort of Aubusson red on a lower key. I was pained to hear that the blue of the dyer with the scissors-throwing wives is not quite so successful. But I am happy to add that nobody threw any more scissors at us. We were now much too formidable a party, what with the inspectors, the husbands that went with the looms, and odd relatives who happened in to inspect the *Firengi*. What the weavers might better have thrown at us, and what in that case would have killed us like a shot, were the combs with which they beat down their rows of knots. These heavy iron tools, which weavers

PERSIAN MINIATURES

often represent on their rugs and which westerners explain in the most fantastic ways, are much bigger and clumsier than the ones used in Hamadan—like most of the other appliances we saw, for that matter.

All this was highly interesting if you happen to be interested in rugs. If, like me, you are more interested in people, there were things to see in the rooms containing the looms. They all had mud floors, of course, and rugs to sit on. Nobody could afford such a thing as a big carpet. Most of them were also provided with a *kursi*, and were redolent of that penetrating odour of *tapeh*. Many of them had no windows at all. The loom would be set up, for the sake of the light, in front of a door so low that you had to stoop to get through it. And once inside you had to walk softly lest you step on a baby. The true place for a baby, of course, is under the *kursi*; but babies have a shifty way of not staying put. When they do, it is sometimes because the poor little wretches remain lost to sight too long under the quilt, and get smothered in the stench of the *tapeh*.

One loom we inspected was in a pitch-dark back room, reached through two others. There two women were weaving away without seeing a sign of what they were doing, or without missing a knot. For our benefit they lighted a lamp—and such a lamp! It was a blue earthenware bowl of oil, with a nick at one end to keep the wick in place, set in a handled tray. As the afternoon drew on we saw many more lamps of the same kind, some of coloured earthenware, some nothing but a tin pot. The best of them gave out no more than a spark. So remember it the next time your right-angled Anglo-Saxon eye is offended by some inequality of design or colour in a Per-

WILD BOAR

sian rug. With the matter of colour, however, Blue Beard has something to do, as he is not likely to dye all the wool needed for one rug in one water. Tethered to another loom we found a woolly lamb, no doubt waiting to make his contribution to the masterpiece of the house. I don't remember whether this house was the one where they had taken off the top of the *kursi* and two women were making barley bread over the *tapeh* fire, kneading their dough by beating it against the cobblestones that lined the fire-hole. And somewhere else a man sat in a pit at the light end of the room where his ladies were weaving, manufacturing himself a narrow strip of brown homespun for an *aba*. His apparatus was more like what we understand by a loom. By pressing a pedal with his foot he worked the alternate threads of his warp back and forth, while between them he threw from one hand to the other the shuttle carrying the woof.

Outside the houses looked more substantial than most village houses, because a good deal of stone was set in their mud. Few of them were more than one storey high, and one huddled close to the next as if land were as precious as on Manhattan Island. Most of them had interior open spaces, however, which were more like barnyards than city courts. In one we saw a dovecote, made like everything else of clay and full of the prettiest cooing inhabitants. Almost every yard, furthermore, contained a watch-dog. There wasn't a *tuleh* or a *tazi* among them. They were all plain *sags*—and all perfectly ready to tear us limb from limb. They seemed to be as much at home on the roofs as on the ground, snarling down at us from the tops of the houses in the most inhospitable manner or barking after us for the length of a street and showing

PERSIAN MINIATURES

every disposition to reach down and nip off somebody's ear if they got half a chance. They got none, I am happy to report, though in the end they began to be reconciled to our presence among their friends. So we went home at last, passing through a tilted square with a big pool in it. Women and children came and went about the pool with earthenware amphoræ on their shoulders, quite in the most approved classic manner. A less classic mosque stood at one side of the square, which we recognised only when a small boy mounted to one corner of the roof and chanted the call to sunset prayer. Below us we could just distinguish the glimmer of the river, winding away under the afterglow between its bare poplars. They stood out the more darkly because of the pale slope beyond, topped by a diamond star.

III

On our second night in Erzamfud it is not necessary to enlarge. It was a replica of the first, minus the *kursi*. Even the cat did not fail us with her devilish performances. Yet Habib, it is true, saved us from monotony by the heights to which he rose in the way of dinner. And the dinner, after all, was followed by a sufficiently historic event. For be it known that on St. Valentine's Day, 1914, Erzamfud saw what I confidently believe to have been its first game of bridge, played by an Englishman, a Frenchman, an Irishman, and an American—wherein the last, according to his wont, was ignominiously routed by the forces of the Entente.

Nor is there much to say of our return the next morning to Hamadan. Erzamfud gathered as one man, not to say as one dog, to see us off down the long white valley

WILD BOAR

of muffled water. The sky was covered again, and so much the colour of the tops of the hills that we could barely detect where one stopped and the other began. From the village trail we presently struck into a well-travelled road that led us home by the way we ought to have taken before—and alas, I never saw again the nameless village of stone houses where I meant to write the Great American Novel! But I was perfectly willing not to have to pass again the bridge of Al Sirat. Other bridges we passed in plenty, several of them brick ones with pointed arches, though more often than not we forded the half-frozen streams. It gave me a pang to hear that if we had only started in the opposite direction we might have ended in Isfahan. As it was, the highway gave me a new comprehension of the stories I had heard about motoring in Persia. There were boulders strewing the middle of it and gulches gouged out of it which nothing but a "tank" could possibly have coped with. Mere horses could no more than follow a trail at one side—until they met a caravan. Most of the caravans were mule or donkey trains. But several times we encountered long strings of camels, rocking down to Isfahan by daylight in this cold weather. Bobby pretended to be alarmed by that extraordinary ophidian air of theirs, having seen a million or more of them during his checkered career, and he jumped about more skittishly than became his years.

After passing through one or two big mud villages, in one of which some boys were playing on the roofs a game of ball I had no time to look into, the country flattened out in front of us. Below the farther edge of it we could see the plain of Hamadan, uncannily blue under the gray sky. You would have thought the horses recognised it

PERSIAN MINIATURES

as well as we—and very likely they did better. At any rate, there was no keeping them together after that. Each went his own gait in a thick snow that soon began to fall again. Then, if ever, was my best chance to break my neck, for we soon took to the fields. And with fields criss-crossed by irrigation ditches, and pitted by the yawning mouths of holes that end in subterranean streams, cross-country riding in the land of the Sun furnishes the elements of an exciting sport. It was the more exciting now because the flurrying snow made it impossible to see where one was going. However, Bobby leaped brooks like a grasshopper and by the grace of God he landed me in no bottomless pit but at the Khanum's lunch table, very hot, not a little out of breath after that long gallop, and highly exhilarated by the pleasures of—boar hunting.

I am sorry, Nimrod, to have told you after all not very much about the wild boar of northwestern Iran. But what would you? Life is like that. Who ever came home with that in his bag which he set out to get? And if you choose to spell my title in a different way, I shall not be the one to complain.

XVII

VIGNETTE OF A TIME GONE BY

You, sir, I entertain you for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say, they are Persian attire; but let them be changed.

William Shakespeare: THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

HE WAS born in Italy: I never asked him why. He was brought up in France: I never asked him why either, having skeletons in my own closet. And here he is in Hamadan, unable to disguise his fair hair and blue eyes of the north under any tall white lamb's wool cap, drilling gendarmes, tracking brigands, and otherwise bearing strange testimony to that in man which even before Europe took to living in trenches would revolt against delicate days and a Christian bed. His Viking fathers might mount a beaked galley and steer for England or Normandy or Sicily. For him there was nothing to do, and for other young Swedish officers who wanted trouble, but to go out to Persia.

They generally found what they wanted. I remember one who, spending a night in a supposedly friendly village, fell victim to a feud between one of his own Persian lieutenants and his host. I remember another whom, as he set about dynamiting the door of a mud castle between Shiraz and the Gulf, a Kashgai shot from an upper

PERSIAN MINIATURES

loophole. And the Major: having served his time unscathed, he gave my lords of the hills one more chance to square accounts by organising a farewell drive against them before going home to wed. For after all he is a human Major, subject to like passions as we. Do I not remember a party when we started asking him indiscreet questions? It came out, at last, that he had just been shooting one of his precious cut-throats. This was a gendarme of whom it had been discovered that he was betraying information to brigands, letting imprisoned ones go, and supplying them with rifles. He then deserted, but was caught and courtmartialled. And it fell upon the unhappy Major to cast the deciding vote as to what should be done with him. At the word, not all the firing-squad pulled their triggers. But enough of them did for the Major to come late to dinner, to eat next to nothing, to refuse to dance afterward, and to stay longer than the other guests, with a funny look in his gay blue eyes, saying he was tired of talking Persian all the time.

Of the house where he lived by himself I knew only that there was nothing in it but rugs and a couple of orderlies who knew how to boil rice and grease rifles. For the rest, the Major was generally out of it, collecting copy for successive chapters of the tale of Abbas the Highwayman, which ran like a continued story through my year in Hamadan. That Abbas, you may remember, was the individual who robbed a messenger of the Bank of 17,000 *tomans*. He was a young gentleman of twenty-four, reputed to be of most agreeable manners and appearance, who owned villages here and there and wives in every one. His favourite residence was not unlike that of the Old Man of the Mountain, being perched on a crag

VIGNETTE OF A TIME GONE BY

of Sultan Bulagh, surrounded on three sides by precipices. To get him out of it was not simple, without losing more men than the Major liked to spare. But every now and then the Major would pounce on one of his more accessible villages, turn it inside out to see if Abbas happened to be there, and rase every one of its mud houses to the ground, after confiscating valuables and making a selection of wives and confederates for prison or the firing-squad.

While the secret service of the Young Man of the Mountain was much too good for him to get his neck into any such sling, the Major made many a fruitful haul on these little raids. On one of them he unearthed 1,500 of the missing *tomans*. On another, not having read his "Arabian Nights" for nothing, he surprised in an Ali Baba jar of pretty blue earthenware, apparently full of flour, a powdery person who knew something about the remaining 15,500. A good many of them, it appeared, were to be looked for in the pockets of certain personages in Hamadan too lofty for me to name. The resourceful Abbas accordingly proposed, through neutral channels, that he be made a gendarme himself and be put in charge of his favourite section of the Russian road! But he failed to keep the midnight tryst which the Major agreed upon for the discussion of this ticklish subject, and transferred his activities to another part of the country. So, quite by accident, did that amusing villain meet his end. For, encountering a carriage in which another Swedish officer happened to be making a peaceful journey, followed by no more than three gendarmes, the doughty Abbas began to shoot. The three gendarmes replied in kind and got killed for their pains. As for the Swede, he drew a bullet, too. But it did not prevent him from

PERSIAN MINIATURES

whipping out his revolver in time to lay low the Young Man of the Mountain and two of his band. And never, never will the Major forgive him for that undeserved piece of luck.

Such, in those quaint old times, were the ways in which active young men found outlet for their superfluous energy. Curious to look back on, eh? Yet more curious is it to consider that out of such stuff as this were concocted half the books we used to read in that prehistoric age which ended in August, 1914. Being myself no romancer, but a sober recorder of fact, I have attempted to make no copy out of the Major and his Persian brigand. Can you not see, though, how somebody else, putting in a petticoat or two and deflecting one of those numerous bullets into the Major's hide or dogging him to his wedding day, might have cooked up a pretty enough novel of the Zenda school? And can you imagine anybody reading it—now? How pale and impossible most of them have automatically become, through the simple fact that after a long period of mere existence the world suddenly began to live! And who but the high lords of romance like Kipling and Conrad will be saved from the scrap-heap of conventions, subterfuges, and timidities piling up around us in these epic days? Even Stevenson: how will he come off, I wonder? For adventure has grown poignant since his time, and there are new tests of courage and endurance since that popular legend of him was put together which left so strangely out of account the very human man behind it. At any rate, who can read to-day the stories of sabre and spur he fathered? Or those desolating American novels, I believe one called them, about the office boy who made

VIGNETTE OF A TIME GONE BY

good, and the pure young man who went into politics, and the naughty young man who went lassoing steers or digging gold? Is it conceivable that those creaking inventions of string and pasteboard, those hasards of wooden swords and back-drop castles, those imitations of imitations of imitations, not only found breathless readers but piled up fortunes for their writers? Done! Finished! Exploded! Or if not, I weep for my race. Any daily paper, any number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, contains stories ten times more thrilling—and most of them written, mind you, by men who don't know how to write. Did those other people? Perhaps it was not their fault, after all, if they were born too soon, and had too little to humble them, too little to inspire. But what things the next generation will have to write about—if only it finds out how!



XVIII

AVICENNA

War makes a people run through its phases of existence fast. It would have taken the Arabs many thousand years to have advanced intellectually as far as they did in a single century, had they, as a nation, remained in profound peace. They did not merely shake off that dead weight which clogs the movement of a people—its inert mass of common people; they converted that mass into a living force. National progress is the sum of individual progress; national immobility the result of individual quiescence.

J. W. Draper: HISTORY OF THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPE

I

IT IS perhaps fitting that among the few “sights” of so ancient a city as Hamadan, the greater number are tombs of famous people who have lived there. But it is a sample of the capriciousness of fame that the tomb most frequently pointed out to the traveller from afar is that of Queen Esther and her cousin Mordecai—who, if they ever existed, owe the memory of them that lingers in a forgetful world to one unknown pen, and to the accident of a young girl’s beauty. Whereas Avicenna— Well, perhaps genius is an accident, too, if a rarer one, and one that demands more of its possessor. And beauty is beauty, while philosophy is

AVICENNA

merely philosophy. So it is that Layard, the excavator of Nineveh, inquired in vain for the grave that now adds most honour to the name of Ecbatana. So it is that Prof. Williams Jackson places it in quite a different quarter of the town from the one where I was told to look for it. And so it is that I, who warn you against Jackson's honestly named "rough draft," cannot say, as he apparently can, that I ever set foot in the mausoleum of the Prince of Sages.

This is not because I never saw that low mud dome facing a little walled garden on the right bank of the river, as you go from Kolapa to the Bazaar. Nor is it because I had any reason to doubt its authenticity. It is much more certain that a wise man named—not Avicenna, to be sure, but something like it, once breathed the thin air of Elvend than that the beautiful Jewess Esther ever did; and tradition seems always to have marked the place of his burial. Another tradition, indeed, has marked his house, in a wall of which I am told on very good authority that some treatises of his were once uncovered. But when they said to me "That is Avicenna's tomb," they had no more to say about it. Nor was I very much wiser when I turned over the odds and ends of books at my disposal in Hamadan. Only after I had gone away and had turned over other books, in a world unknown to Avicenna, did he who once filled the world with the rumour of his name begin to become for me anything more than a name. So I can no more than make belated amends for my ignorance by weaving to his memory this ragged wreath..

Know, then, that this Avicenna was a Pico della Mirandola of the tenth century, named Abu Ali al-Hosein

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Abdallah ibn Sina. Although accounted the last and the greatest of the Arab philosophers of the East—a century or two after him there were others, you remember, in the West—he was really a Persian. He wrote in Arabic because it was the learned language of the time, just as the Europeans who first translated him wrote in Latin. His father was a native of Balkh or Belkh, now in Afghanistan but then one of the four chief cities of the great province of Khorasan. Ibn Sina himself, however, was born in 980 in a village near Bokhara where his father is said to have been a tax collector. Bokhara, too, was then a part of Persia, and the lad passed the greater part of his boyhood in that city.

In our time, thanks to the invention of printing and the ease with which we get about the world, there is an infinity of places where a scholar may lay the foundations of his scholarship. At that time, on the contrary, there were very few cities containing books and the society of those who read or wrote them. But Bokhara, as it happened, was one of those cities, and one of the most important. Incredible as it seems to us of the self-satisfied West, Bokhara was worthy to be compared with Baghdad and Constantinople in that age when Berlin and Petrograd did not yet exist, when London, Paris, and Vienna were humble frontier towns of which no stranger had heard, and when Cordova was not quite at the pitch of its preëminence. The day of Baghdad, indeed, had already begun to wane. The Caliph Mamun, under whom and under whose father Harun al Rashid Baghdad had rivalled Athens, Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople as a focus of intellectual activity, was a hundred and fifty years dead. The centre of gravity of the Abbasid caliph-

AVICENNA

ate had already shifted to Khorasan, and Bokhara had become the seat of one of those local dynasties which make Persian history from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries a kaleidoscope impossible for any one but the fanatic to follow. Suffice it to say that the Samanids of Bokhara were descended from another Persian of Balkh, whose sons had served Harun al Rashid, whose grandsons had established a kingdom of their own under the nominal suzerainty of the distant Caliphs, and whose power was now threatened by the constantly increasing pressure from the East of the Turks. They were great patrons of letters, those Samanids, loving to have about them not only books but those who wrote books. I have read of a poet who lived a little earlier than Ibn Sina, that the Emir of Bokhara treated him magnificently enough for him never to go out of the house without a train of two hundred servants and four hundred camels! Nuh or Noah II, the Samanid under whom Ibn Sina was born, was one of the last of his line and not quite so munificent a friend of poets. Nevertheless, Bokhara was still such a place as a boy like Ibn Sina would have chosen to be brought up in, if he had had anything to say about it.

Of his early life the Persians tell the most fanciful things—which probably have a substratum of truth. He belonged to a race which matures quickly, he lived in one of those periods which quicken maturity, and he was gifted with unusual powers of mind and memory. And, after all, considerable as was the enlightenment of the time, the schoolboy of his age had less to learn than the schoolboy of ours. So it was that the future philosopher, whose family was presumably not in the most exalted circumstances, began at the age of five to take lessons in

PERSIAN MINIATURES

arithmetic from a grocer of Bokhara—no doubt with the help of an abacus such as you may see in any Persian bazaar or Chinese laundry. At ten he knew all there was to know about the Indian calculus, as arithmetic was then called, being thoroughly grounded as well in Persian and Arabic literature and the Koran. He was also well started in algebra and theology. About this time he fell into the hands of a wandering physician, apparently a Nestorian, who laid the foundation of Ibn Sina's medical career, besides teaching him logic, Euclid, the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, and the *Almagest*—otherwise the astronomy of Claudius Ptolemy. Add to this the mysticism which he picked up from one Ismail the Sufi, and that tincture of Aristotle without which no man could then or for long afterward count himself educated, and you will see that the young Ibn Sina must have been an infant prodigy of the most pernicious sort. At sixteen, if you please, he had begun to practise medicine on his own account, evolving certain new methods of treatment. But luckily there was in him a strong streak of the human. A French biographer whom I have consulted says that he was of *mœurs déplorables*, and lets it go at that. I suppose deplorable habits are deplorable habits the world over, and it is not necessary to specify! An English biographer lets us into a few details, dwelling more on the taste of this remarkable young man for strong waters than on his penchant for fair persons. The strong waters, it seems, he first experimented with by way of keeping awake at his work. At any rate, he was not content to investigate books. He investigated life with equal enthusiasm. And by the time he was seventeen there was very little left in his world for him to learn.

AVICENNA

At this early age Ibn Sina made the beginning of his immense reputation. Nuh II was not the sick king in Bokhara about whom Matthew Arnold has told us, but Nuh II fell ill; and no one was able to cure him save master Ibn Sina, who was thereupon given the run of the king's famous library. And in it he discovered that there was, after all, something left for him to learn. He had of course read Aristotle long before that. Everybody did in those days, except in uncivilised places like London, Paris, or Vienna. In fact, he had read Aristotle through, in Arabic, forty times—without getting much out of him, until in the king's library he found the Aristotelian commentaries of another great man named Farabi. This Farabi was a Turk of the ninth century who went to Baghdad, learned Arabic, found a princely patron who took him to Mosul, and before he died in Damascus acquired such fame as a philosopher that he became known among the Arabs as the Second Master, Aristotle being the First and Ibn Sina himself the Third. The discovery of this great man was accounted by Ibn Sina as the real beginning of his intellectual life, just as the discovery of other great men has started other browsers in libraries on their careers. And so enchanted was Ibn Sina by his discovery that he went at once to a mosque, performed his ablutions, gave thanks upon his prayer rug—you may be perfectly sure that it was not a “Bokhara”!—and made an alms to the poor.

Not long after this, when he was eighteen, Ibn Sina left Bokhara and returned to his father's village, called by some Afshena and by others Harmaitin, where he prepared to become a tax collector himself. Whether it was at this time that the king's library caught fire I

PERSIAN MINIATURES

cannot say. Ibn Sina's enemies accused Ibn Sina of setting it on fire in order to keep to himself the knowledge he had gained from it. But he had barely begun to make use of that knowledge, by starting the literary work which filled so much of the rest of his life, when both he and his enemies found other things to think about. In the first place his protector, Nuh II, in spite of the famous cure, died, neither Ibn Sina nor any one else having been able to save him. Then life in Bokhara began to grow extremely uncomfortable by reason of certain rude neighbours called Turks, who were just beginning to trouble that polite Persian country of the Oxus which the Arabs had first troubled three hundred years before. And about 1002 Ibn Sina's father died. That, perhaps not unhappily, put an end to tax collecting and threw our young Aristotelian upon his own resources. So, perforce, he became a true peripatetic. His first step in the long series of wanderings that ended nearly forty years later by the river in Hamadan took him to a place called Urganj, or in Arabic Urvjensh, ancestor of the modern Khiva. Here another local prince, Mamun—of Khwarasm? Khuarizm? Vambéry, who passed there for a native, spells it Khahrezm—held a court less lordly than that of the Samanids but one at which men of learning and letters were equally welcome. And it is proof of the peculiar estimation in which such men were held at that time in that part of the world that Ibn Sina had not been long in Urganj before his new protector received a peremptory demand from another and more potent sovereign to the effect that the five most learned members of Mamun's court be forthwith despatched to his own court at Ghazna, in Afghanistan.

AVICENNA

This truculent individual was one of the most notable figures of that age. He was the first, they say, to wear the title of Sultan, which means power or authority. In letters he was less adept than in arms and in the use of elephants—to which much of his success in battle was attributed by the more polished Persians of the time. By race a Turk, named Mahmud and appropriately nicknamed the Idol Smasher, he was at that moment engaged in smashing more than idols, being intent on carving a short-lived empire out of the borders of Persia and India. In 1017 he annexed the territories of Kharzem, to which his demand for the wise men of Prince Mamun was a preliminary. Three of the wise men, among whom was the historian Al-Biruni, consented to make the best of a bad business and go to Ghazna. As for Ibn Sina and his fellow-philosopher Masihi, they took not kindly to the notion of being driven into the service of an Idol Smasher and a Turk. Perhaps they had heard about their great contemporary the poet Firdeusi, who dedicated to Mahmud of Ghazna his masterpiece the *Shah Nameh*. This historical epic occupies in modern Persian literature the place which the *Divina Commedia* does in Italian, being the first serious piece of literature composed in the spoken instead of in the learned language of Persia under the Caliphs. Firdeusi finished his poem about the time Ibn Sina left Bokhara. When he took it to Mahmud at Ghazna, the Turkish Idol Smasher paid him what might seem to many poets a fair price, namely, 20,000 *dirhems*, or some \$2,000. We must remember, however, that the writing of this long poem had taken the best part of twenty-five years, that in those days one edition of a book consisted of one copy, and that poets in

PERSIAN MINIATURES

general were treated very much more handsomely than they are now. At any rate, Firdeusi was so disgusted by the Idol Smasher's appreciation of poetry that he divided the money between a bath-man and a sherbet-seller and ran away to his native town of Tus. There he dedicated his book anew to the local potentate, in a hundred couplets of satire on Sultan Mahmud. The *Sipah-bud* accepted the honour, at the rate of a thousand *dirhems* a couplet, and discreetly suppressed the dedication. And several years later, as the funeral procession of Firdeusi was passing out of one gate of Tus, there entered by another a caravan from the Idol Smasher, bringing the dead poet a belated recompense of 1,500,000 *dirhems*.

But to return to Ibn Sina: he fled from Urganj with his associate Masihi, who died in the desert before reaching Merv. From there Ibn Sina proceeded to Tus and Nishapur, whence he made his way into the low country at the southeastern corner of the Caspian then called Tabaristan. There he found another patron, in the town called by the Persians Gurgan and by the Arabs Jurjan. And there he began the Canon of Medicine on which chiefly rested his mediæval fame. The story goes that his success in curing a fellow-traveller at an inn was the means of his performing a more profitable cure for the nephew of still another petty monarch, one Kabus, nephew himself of the discreet *Sipahbud* who treated Firdeusi so handsomely, of that Ziarid house which in the tenth and eleventh centuries reigned over Tabaristan and Irak Ajemi. It would appear that Ibn Sina was the father of Janet and the Freudian family of psycho-analysts, if there were not in this case some echo of an earlier one

AVICENNA

involving Erosistratus of Alexandria and one of the Seleucids. For by keeping his finger on the pulse of the young prince, while talking of this and of that, Ibn Sina discovered that the name of a certain young woman produced so marked a flutter of the patient's heart that the physician was able to diagnose the case and prescribe a perfect cure. His fortune, therefore, seemed to be made —in spite of the fact that the Idol Smasher had caused Ibn Sina's portrait to be sent to the four quarters of the East, with the order that whoever discovered the original should arrest him and carry him to Ghazna. There is no hope, I fear, that after a thousand years any of those miniatures will turn up in some one's album! At any rate Kabus, himself a poet and a former patron of Al-Biruni, paid no attention to his rival's demand. But, after a career very nearly as checkered as that of his young physician, he died or was assassinated somewhere about 1012, not long after Ibn Sina had settled down under his roof. And the rumoured approach of the terrible Turk caused our hero to take the road again, this time in the direction of Rei.

The name of Rei, or Rhages, whose ruins lie not far from Tehran, is now most familiar to collectors of Persian pottery, to say nothing of forgers of the same. But in that time it was a great city, known as the birth-place of Harun al Rashid, containing one of the most famous hospitals of the East. The fame of that hospital was largely due to an earlier philosopher-physician, and by some accounts a greater, whose name the Europeans have twisted into Rhazes. There Ibn Sina found his next royal patient and patron in the person of Majd ed Deuleh, the local ruler, who was of the Buyids of Irak

PERSIAN MINIATURES

and Fars. Ibn Sina had stayed long enough in Rei to write some thirty of his treatises, when a quarrel between Majd ed Deuleh and his brother Shams ed Deuleh of Hamadan, and more particularly the continued encroachments of his old *bête noir* the Turk of Ghazna, caused the unhappy philosopher to exercise his philosophy and pack up anew. So he went on to Kazvin, where he remained but a short time. And his next abiding place was the one which was destined to be his last—the pleasant town of Hamadan.

Exactly in what year Ibn Sina arrived in the city where he now sleeps I have not been able to learn. I take it to have been somewhere between 1015 and 1020. He must by this time have been in his thirties, or near them, yet not too old to interest a patron whom the chronicles all too obscurely describe as a highborn lady. The highborn lady, however, soon passed him over to the very Shams ed Deuleh who had been concerned in his leaving Rei, and who at that time was the prince of Hamadan. And under the protection of this personage Ibn Sina of Bokhara now became Vizier of Ecbatana. We accordingly have more copious records of this period of his life than if he had been a mere philosopher or man of letters. Whether it was that his talents as an administrator were not equal to his ability as a writer and a leech, I cannot say. But the Kurdish and Turkish soldiers of the Persian prince presently made what we call in Hamadan a *shulukh*, a row, in the course of which they pillaged the house and went so far as to demand the head of the adventurer from Bokhara. The latter hid for forty days in the house of a friendly *sheikh* until the prince, falling ill, caused such minute search to be made for his Vizier-

AVICENNA

physician that Ibn Sina was found and brought back to court to cure him.

By that time, I suppose, if any heads disappeared they were those of the soldiers. At any rate, Ibn Sina continued to be court physician and Vizier, and enjoyed a brief season of prosperity which ended with the death of his master in 1021. During this time he completed the famous *Canon*—though I give the critic leave to differ from me—and he conceived if he did not finish the almost equally famous *Shifa*, known in its Latin translation as *Sanatio*. He also wrote many other treatises, none of which prevented him from leading a life much livelier than I would ever suspected possible in staid Hamadan. By day he discharged his public duties as Vizier, physician, and arch philosopher of the eleventh century. The night he seems to have divided between his writing and his pleasures. These appear to have brought him into contact with singers, dancers, wine openers, and other persons of a sort we do not habitually associate with philosophy. Yet who shall say that friends of many kinds, and experiences of all sorts, do not conduce to philosophy? For my own part, while I do not go so far as to set up Ibn Sina as a pattern for youth, I do not find it in my heart to cry out very bitterly against him for finding life quite as interesting as books.

Precisely what happened when Shams ed Deuleh died is not very clear from the accounts I have read. Ibn Sina either fell from power or resigned, with the intention of giving himself up to his literary work. Perhaps he had by this time discovered that it was invariably his lot to find a patron whose star was on the wane; and one whose star was in the ascendant seemed to be Abu Jafar Mohammed, otherwise styled as Ala ed Deuleh, chief of the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Buyids reigning in Isfahan. At all events, he either made overtures to this prince or was suspected of doing so by the successor of Shams ed Deuleh—from whom he hid in the house of an apothecary but who found him and shut him up in a fortress somewhere outside of Hamadan. Ibn Sina was released, however, when Ala ed Deuleh captured Hamadan in 1023 or 1024. And after writing another well-known treatise he decamped, with two slaves, his brother, and a person somewhat vaguely sketched as “a favourite pupil,” to Isfahan, in what must have been the effective disguise of a Sufi ascetic.

Ibn Sina was now in middle life, he had written most of the works on which his fame rests, his reputation was already spread far and wide throughout the extremely intelligent world in which he lived. Isfahan received him with all the honours which in that faraway day and in that remote country were paid to a talent like his. A palace was put at his disposal, he was allowed a handsome pension, and he fulfilled for Ala ed Deuleh, on a larger scale, the functions he had performed for Shams ed Deuleh. He now turned his mind to literature and philology, to which he had been criticised for paying too little attention. But he did not cease to take interest in the more exhilarating things of life; for this most successful period of his career was if anything the most disordered. A more curious example of the constancy of fate was that his life-long enemy, Mahmud of Ghazna, continued to throw the dust of perturbation into the cup of his security, as Firdeusi said of the same personage, and once very nearly succeeded in capturing both Ibn Sina and his master. The Idol Smasher did capture and carry off to Ghazna a quantity of Ibn Sina’s books. And when the terrible Turk died

AVICENNA

in 1030 his son Masud zealously took up his policy of harrying Ibn Sina and with him all western Persia—until a quietus was put upon him by those more terrible Turks, the Seljuks.

Ibn Sina, in the meantime, advanced in years; and some of my readers will no doubt be happy to hear that he paid penalties. His constitution, undermined by his careless habit of burning the candle at both ends, was all but shattered by an attempt which one of his slaves made to poison him. Nevertheless, he recovered sufficiently to accompany his royal patron back to Hamadan. But there, in the year 1037, he suffered a relapse into a mortal illness. It is another trait of the human in him that he made a death-bed repentance of his sins. He freed his slaves, he restored—give ear, O followers of *Æsculapius!*—moneys which might have been considered dishonestly gained, he distributed his goods among the poor, and he caused the Koran to be read continuously aloud to him, hearing the whole of it every three days. So he breathed his last in the pleasant month of June, and was buried by that capricious river whose waters flow from the snows of Elvend.

Ibn Sina died just in time to escape the onrush of the Seljuks, who overran Persia and Asia Minor in the middle of the eleventh century. But it is one of the ironies of life that the tomb which now covers his grave was built by a member of that Turkish race from which he spent the better part of his days in attempting to flee. This was another high-born lady, the princess Nigar Khanum, of the Turkoman house of the Kajars, and she reared or restored that humble dome in the year of grace 1877. Under it lies, too, I learned from Prof. Williams Jackson, a mystic poet by the name of Abu Said. Professor

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Jackson says no more about him, however, nor was the Sea of Sciences able to tell me anything very definite. What was my pleasure then, upon reaching faraway New York, which is now a greater magazine of books than was ever Bokhara or Alexandria, to learn from Prof. E. G. Browne that a certain Abu Said ibn Abul Khair, the father of Sufi verse, was a contemporary and friend of Ibn Sina. Professor Browne quotes a quaint story to the effect that after the first meeting of these two great men Ibn Sina said: "What I know, he sees," while Abu Said's remark was: "What I see, he knows." Browne also translates a couple of quatrains exchanged by the famous pair. The first, which was Ibn Sina's, runs as follows:

"'Tis we who on God's grace do most rely,
Who put our vices and our virtues by,
For where thy grace exists, the undone done
Is reckoned, and the done undone thereby."

To which the Sufi made response:

"O steeped in sin and void of good, dost try
To save thyself, and thy misdeeds deny?
Can sins be cancelled, or neglect made good?
Vainly on grace divine dost thou rely!"

Professor Browne says that Abu Said was born in Khorasan in 968 and that he died in 1049—he does not say where. Let us have it then, till better proof be forthcoming, that those two forgotten great men of a forgotten great age are really the ones who lie together under the humble dome which the Turkoman princess raised on the river bank of Hamadan.

AVICENNA

II

This is a story, after all, not too vivid or complete. What we do not know about the Pico della Mirandola of Persia, with his so humanly contradictory traits, piques our curiosity more than what we do know. Yet it is a fact that the occupant of that obscure mausoleum, who wrote in one of the least known and most difficult of living tongues and who never went out of Persia, left a name as the Prince of Sages that for six hundred years after his death filled the world with its rumour. Amid all the varied distractions of his life he found time to write over a hundred books—some very short, it is true, but others very long. They covered almost every branch of science as it was then known: logic, metaphysics, theology, psychology, philosophy, mysticism, medicine, chemistry, alchemy, botany, zoology, mathematics, music. The greater number of his works are lost, but among them we know that there was an encyclopedia of human knowledge in twenty volumes. Another was entitled “On the Utility and Advantage of Science,” and a third “On Astronomical Observations.” He correctly described the formation of mountains and the process of petrifaction. He found leisure to catalogue the medicinal plants that grow on the slopes of Elvend. He was familiar with the surgical procedure known as the intubation of the larynx. The fruit of some of his philological studies is embodied in his treatise “On the Arabic Language and Its Properties.” He was withal a poet, composing several of his shorter works in rhyme. Among his imaginative writings is an allegory called “Hai ibn Yakzan.” And to him are ascribed on no less than three contemporary authorities many of the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

quatrains of his follower Omar Khayyam. One of them is very familiar to us in Fitzgerald's translation:

"Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a knot unravelled by the road:
But not the Master-Knot of Human Fate."

Fitzgerald also translated Jami's narrative poem of "Salaman and Absal," the story of which was first written by Ibn Sina.

If I really were to do my duty by you, reader of mine, and by this time either my friend or my enemy, I should now proceed to expound to you in detail the philosophical system of him whom you know as Avicenna, pointing out to you exactly what he took from Hippocrates through Galen, modified by Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists, what from the Sufis whose tenets his friend Abu Said first crystallised into verse, and what he added out of his own curious desire, so characteristic of the thought of his time and so like what Pico della Mirandola attempted four hundred years later, to harmonise not only Plato with Aristotle but the general body of Greek philosophy as it came to him through the garbled translations of Baghdad with the dogmas of Islam. Incidentally, I should warn you against a certain pseudo-Aristotelian Theology which the Arabs accepted as genuine but which was really a collection of the Enneads of Plotinus, of the third or fourth century. I should then explain the Oriental theory of Emanation, dwelling on Ibn Sina's favourite idea that the body is the tool of the soul. To this exposition I should add an abstract of the Canon and the *Sanatio*, which were the basis of mediæval medicine. Nor should I fail to

AVICENNA

analyse Ibn Sina's division of learning into the speculative and practical sciences, followed in all the European universities until the seventeenth century, or to state that his aim was not to teach truth but to preserve from error. And having done so it would behoove me to assign him his true place in the hierarchy of philosophy, as well as to estimate the literary qualities of this author of over a hundred books.

If you are that kind of a reader, however, you will not read this kind of a book. And I shall not be so foolish as to attempt to disguise from you the fact that I have never read Avicenna or his master Aristotle, and never shall. There was a time, indeed, when such literature had for me a fantastic interest. That was the time when I began to discover that religion, after all, does not explain all one would like to know about this cruel and comforting world —neither my religion nor the other religions of which I vaguely took cognisance. And I was young enough to imagine that the philosophers had been more successful than the priests in unravelling “the master-knot of human fate.” But by the time I found out that all they could do was to formulate rather more clearly and elaborately than myself what we can know and what we cannot know, I began to recognise that the tendency of my own mind—if I may so dignify that chaos of instincts and impulses—ran to the concrete rather than to the abstract, and that there was quite enough in the appearances of life to keep one honest and busy without waiting to solve the origin or the end of life.

This is no doubt a debasing confession to make; but what can I do? I am made like that. And nothing interests or imposes me less than a formal system of any

PERSIAN MINIATURES

kind. For I cannot make myself believe that the system ever has been or ever will be devised which will not sooner or later be upset. What does interest me is the human and personal in it all, the eternal struggle of men to understand, to learn, to perfect. As a man, therefore, as a friend of princes, mystics, and dancers, as a personality so vital and so curious of life that he filled his life to the brim with toil and play, and made for himself one of the greatest names in a time not one of the least, Avicenna interests me extraordinarily. They say, indeed, that he does not deserve his immense reputation: that as an Aristotelian he is inferior to his predecessor Farabi and to his successor Averroës; that in medicine he was surpassed by Rhazes of Rei. And who knows? It is often an accident that lifts one man into fame above another—an accident of birth, of time, of place, of style, of method, of something so little a part of him as the friends he happened to make. Yet however Avicenna acquired so immense a fame, the fact remains that he acquired it. And that humble tomb of his in Hamadan is a monument to one of the strangest incidents in the history of human thought, whereby a Persian of Bokhara absorbed so much of the learning of Greece that he was able to pass it on to Europe at the moment when Europe began to stir out of the ignorance and degradation into which our ancestors had sunk.

One of the strongest incentives to the reading of history is that curious rhythm of history which sets one race up and pulls another down, the repeated shifting of the centre of gravity of civilisation. A case in point is that of the city of Bokhara, now a ruinous provincial town of Turks, or men of Turkish origin, to attempt to visit which is an

AVICENNA

adventure comparable to exploring the forests of Africa. Yet Bokhara was a notable centre of learning when London and Paris were unknown villages, and in it Avicenna was able to study Greek philosophy when Greece itself was lost in darkness. These are times when we see more vividly than in times of peace how such things may come about. We who are of European origin, however, are so accustomed to saying "We are the people, and wisdom shall die with us," we find it so hard to take seriously the civilisations of the East, and so many barriers of time, space, race, language, and religion shut us off from the period in which our own civilisation was in the making, that the case of Avicenna seems all the more extraordinary. And we incline too much to forget how it was that the Hellenism which was the foundation alike of modern culture and of *kultur* was driven into the East, how the Arabs had a part in saving it from destruction, and how through Spain they communicated it to the barbarous countries of the West.

Athens, of course, was the first capital of civilisation in Europe, the great missionary to the dark continent behind it. How many centuries it cost the Greeks to store up their treasure of Hellenism we may never know; but we do know that the work of those who handed it down to us was done in the short two hundred years between the Persian Wars and the wars of Alexander the Great. With the single exception of Homer, who is supposed to have lived anywhere from 1,100 to 800 B.C., the philosophers, the dramatists, the poets, and the sculptors of the Golden Age flourished between the sixth and the fourth centuries. The capital of the Hellenic world then shifted to the continent from which Greece derived its earliest

PERSIAN MINIATURES

inspiration, and under the Ptolemies Alexandria became the centre of learning and art in the West. Thither were transported from the archives of Athens the originals of the great dramatists, together with all the other manuscripts that could be collected. So zealous indeed were the Alexandrians in the accumulation of books that no visitor was allowed to go away from the city without leaving a copy of any manuscript which he might possess; and when Attalus of Pergamum set about assembling a library of his own in 241 B.C., Ptolemy Epiphanes forthwith prohibited the export of Egyptian papyrus, upon which all the books of the time were written. This did not prevent the Pergamenes from inventing that substitute for papyrus whose name of parchment is derived from their own. But their library of 200,000 volumes was destined to enrich the Alexandrians after all, thanks to Julius Cæsar, who presented it to the latter in partial reparation for the burning by his legionaries of the Brouchion and its books. Papyri, however, were not all that Alexandria could boast. The school of the Neo-Platonists carried on the tradition of the Greek philosophers, while the Museum of Ptolemy Philadelphus became a pioneer centre of scientific research. There the dissection of the human body was first practised, and there did western astronomers first measure a meridian of the earth. Nor did the hostility of the seventh Ptolemy toward men of learning suffice to destroy the leadership of Alexandria among the Greek cities.

With the rise of Rome into an imperial power, toward the beginning of our era, a capital of a new kind grew up in the Mediterranean. Alexandria and Athens continued to be frequented by scholars and lovers of the arts. But

AVICENNA

the political hegemony of Rome naturally attracted so much wealth and wit that the Italian city might have become the intellectual capital of the empire in a profounder sense than it did, had it not been for certain unforeseen circumstances. These were the spread of Christianity, the inroads of the barbarians, and the transfer of the seat of government to the East. Constantinople accordingly became in turn the true capital of Greco-Roman civilisation. And Constantinople enjoyed a far longer period of preëminence, thus not only preserving on Greek ground a remnant of the precious heritage of Athens but developing potent arts of its own.

At the same time there is no denying that between the old order and the new antagonisms arose which were little less formidable than the Goths and the Huns. Two elements in early Christianity were particularly fatal to the achievements of the older time. One of these, indeed, lay in the Greek spirit itself, namely, that intellectual quickness, that desire of definition, which out of a simple and humane creed brought forth an infinity of warring sects and ended in an irreconcilable breach between the churches of East and West. And this, together with differences of language and difficulties of communication, cut off our own ancestors from the benefits of the civilisation that grew up in eastern Europe. The other element of peril was the new Christian spirit of democracy. This is not the time, nor am I of the race, to cry out against democracy! But I may say that between democracy and autocracy lies a hair line which is not easy to draw. Of this fact recent events in Russia are the best possible witness. For a literal democracy is of course an impossible state of society. No man is born free of his circumstances

PERSIAN MINIATURES

or of obligations to his fellowmen, nor can all men be born equal in ability and opportunity. In any concerted effort, moreover, some one must lead. Otherwise the effort is bound to fail. The attempt of democracy is to find the man best fitted to lead, to give him his chance, and to prevent him from abusing it. In outward form, therefore, democracy and autocracy must necessarily resemble each other. The difference is that the democratic leader is obeyed because he is the delegate of the mass, not because he is the master of the mass.

Any new state of freedom, however, naturally produces a confusion of aims and personalities which does not subside until events give them their proper level. What was unfortunate for the world in the coming of Christianity was that the new freedom put the most ignorant and bigotted peasant not on a par with the greatest prince or the most enlightened philosopher, but above him—if that prince or that philosopher did not chance to be of the new religion. And it happens to be a trait of the most educated minds that they do not, in general, show the most enthusiasm for movements of an emotional rather than of an intellectual kind. The consequences for the old Greek learning were therefore of the most disastrous. For so general a zeal for the new religion made it a creditable thing to do away with the symbols of the old. We shall never know how many priceless works of art, how many manuscripts for which we would now pay untold sums, were wilfully destroyed with the best intentions in the world. So did it come about that a pious monk would erase a play of *Æschylus*, a poem of Pindar, or a treatise of Plato, in order to have room to inscribe his views of the nature of the Trinity. And there grew up that dreary

AVICENNA

patristic literature which was the one literary achievement of the time, and which now rests undisturbed in its dust.

Constantine himself set an unfortunate example when he abolished the Greek Asclepieia, not so much temples as hospitals, in which the tradition of Hippocrates had been preserved. More pitiless enemies of the old learning were the emperors Theodosius I and II, under whom the zeal of the church reached such a pitch that Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, caused the books and the scientific instruments of the Museum and the Serapeion to be destroyed. The appliances of Hero and Archimedes were regarded as the tools of some dark magic by the very men who believed relics to possess supernatural power. Clement of Alexandria fulminated against the horrible practise of maintaining private baths—out of which tradition it grew that the Crusaders were looked upon by the Byzantines and the Saracens alike as the filthiest and most barbarous of men. St. Augustine, first among the four great fathers of the church, à propos of the correct Alexandrian theory of the globe, pronounced it impossible that the opposite side of the earth could be inhabited, since the Bible mentioned no such people among the descendants of Adam. Under Cyril, successor of Theophilus in the see of Alexandria, the gifted Hypatia, who represented in the fifth century the culture and elegance of the older time, was mobbed, stripped, and stabbed to death in the city of the Ptolemies. And even so enlightened a sovereign as Justinian the Great, himself of humble origin, having been born in Bulgaria of what may have been Albanian stock, finally closed the schools of Athens and Alexandria and drove their inmates to take refuge in the more tolerant East.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Now it happened that this took place shortly before another abrupt change in the Mediterranean world—the rise of the Arabs. But the Hellenisation of the East—to use a word which must be applied with discretion—was by no means the work of Justinian alone. As early as the sixth century B. C. Greece and Persia had come into contact through the wars between Media and Lydia. The greater wars of Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes in the following century had renewed and broadened this contact, which is reflected in the architecture of Persepolis. And the wars of Alexander and his successors carried the Hellenic influence as far as Bactria, in the region of Bokhara, and India, founding Greek cities all the way from Antioch in Syria and Seleucia on the Tigris to Merv in Khorasan, and beyond. And from the third century B. C. until the appearance of the Arabs in the seventh century A. D. the Parthian and Sasanian kings of Persia were constantly in relation, hostile or otherwise, with their Hellenised neighbours of Syria and Asia Minor or with the Roman emperors. During this thousand years the Persians several times extended their borders to the Black Sea or the Mediterranean, while the Romans reached the Persian Gulf and long maintained the Euphrates as their eastern frontier. I need not repeat here the history of this confused period. But it is interesting to recall that at the battle of Carrhæ, in Mesopotamia, in 53 B. C., 10,000 Roman soldiers were captured by the Parthians and deported to Merv; that the battle where Cæsar came, saw, and conquered took place at the modern Turkish town of Zilleh, near Sivas and not so far from the upper Euphrates; that an older brother of Shapur the Great was disinherited because of his Hellenistic leanings and took

AVICENNA

refuge with Constantine the Great, who afterward wrote to the Sasanian king with regard to the status of Christians in Persia; that Julian the Apostate lost his life while fighting against the Persians on the Tigris in 363; that in 489 when Zeno closed the schools of Edessa, the modern Urfa, they were immediately reopened at Nisibis; that when Justinian in turn closed the schools of Athens in 529, five Greek philosophers found asylum with Nushirvan in Persia, and at his request translated Plato and Aristotle into Persian. This was the Sasanian king who founded or enlarged the school of Gand-i-Shapur—Jundi-Sabur, in its Arabicised form, identified by Le Strange with the modern village of Shahabad between Shuster and Dizful—which was perhaps the one provided with Greek physicians by the emperor Aurelian and which, under Jewish and Nestorian teachers, became a celebrated centre of philosophical and medical study, at a time when such studies were despised in Europe.

The Nestorians, indeed, played a part in bringing together the East and the West which has almost been forgotten. The seacoast of Asia Minor had been Hellenised from great antiquity. But after the conquests of Alexander and the disruption of the Jewish kingdoms Syria was not slow to feel the Greek influence. Antioch in particular rose into prominence as another centre of learning, which contributed both to the Neo-Platonic and to the patristic literature. It was there, in fact, that the name of Christian first came into use, and there did St. Simeon Stylites stand on his uncomfortable pillar. The isolation of Antioch from the West, however, and its relative proximity to Persia, naturally enough brought about a distinction between the Christians of Asia and

PERSIAN MINIATURES

their European brothers. The Syrian Christians had churches as far East as Tus and Merv in 334. In 409 they were officially recognised by Yezdigird I, the Sasanian king of Persia; and in 410 the Council of Seleucia, twin city of Ctesiphon, showed how far the East was from the West by approving the famous Council of Nicæa, held almost a hundred years earlier. This separation became a schism in 431, when the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius, Syrian Bishop of Constantinople, and his followers for their heretical views of the supernatural birth of Christ. And the closing of the schools of Edessa by the emperor Zeno prepared the final break between the Greeks and the Nestorians. Nevertheless the latter continued to be the representatives in the East of the Hellenic culture. The fact that they were accounted heretics perhaps encouraged them to translate into Syriac the philosophers of Athens and Alexandria. At the same time their missionaries pushed on into Asia. By the year 500 Samarkand was a Nestorian bishopric, and the first Nestorians arrived in China in 635, a few years after the first Mohammedans. There exists in China to-day a monument which in 1907 was still standing in Hsi-ang-fu or Chang-an, capital of the T'ang dynasty, recording their presence there in 781. In 845 they, like the Mohammedans, were affected by a decree closing the Buddhist monasteries. And in the farther East they ultimately became merged with the followers of other sects, cut off as they were from their own country by the triumph of Islam and the disturbances caused in Central Asia by the Turks. Many Turks, nevertheless, were converted by Nestorians before falling under the influence of the Arabs. Prester John, about whom Marco

AVICENNA

Polo and the Crusaders spread so many legends, was a Nestorian Turkish chief of Central Asia. In Transoxiana, Persia, and Syria the Nestorians long continued to flourish and to keep alive a remnant of Greek civilisation. Their patriarchs reigned at Seleucia-Ctesiphon from 496 to 762, removing under the Abbasid Caliphs to Baghdad. And when that city was destroyed in 1258 by the Mongolian Hulagu, he, out of deference to his Christian wife, a Kerait Turkish princess of the same tribe as the mythical Prester John, spared the life of the Nestorian Patriarch—whose successors and whose flock were only dispersed in the fourteenth century by the conquests of Timur.

Thus was the ground prepared for that astonishing Saracen renaissance of which Avicenna was one of the most important figures. When the Arabs emerged in the seventh century from their all but unknown peninsula, they broke into a very different world from the one which had seen the Persian Wars, the empire of Alexander, the Augustan age, the founding of Constantinople. Persia was long past its heroic time, while of the great cities that nurtured the civilisation of which we are the heirs, in Constantinople alone did there remain a spark of the antique light. The rest of Europe was sunk in ignorance and superstition, overrun by the barbarians whose descendants were to burn the library of Louvain and destroy the cathedral of Rheims. Everywhere was discord or decay. In quick succession the champions of the new faith conquered Syria, Egypt, Persia, thence marching east and west to the centre of Asia and to the shores of the Atlantic. The battle of Tours, which marked the limit of their advance into Europe, was fought in 732, only a hundred years after the death of the Prophet.

PERSIAN MINIATURES

Far be it from me to deplore the victory of Charles Martel. But there is no shadow of doubt that if the Caliphs of Spain had not been held back behind the Pyrenees, western Europe would have been civilised much more rapidly. And the most astonishing thing about it is that the country from which the conquerors came had not even the memory of greatness. The Prophet himself, capable of dictating what is said to be the masterpiece of Arabic literature, was incapable of writing his own poetry or of reading the chapters of the Koran which others transcribed. As for his first three successors, they were preëminently men of the sword. Yet so far as contemporary records go it is far more certain that the Greek Bishop Theophilus destroyed the books of Alexandria than that Abu Bekr did, the legend of his burning them in the public baths not having been invented till six hundred years later. And Omar built a magnificent mosque in Jerusalem, while one of the Omayads caused mosaicists to come from Constantinople to decorate the church he turned into a mosque and his successors invited to Damascus both Jews and Christians of learning. It was, at any rate, that sudden maturing of the Arab genius, an epic example of the liberation, of the exaltation, which may be produced by a widening of horizons. And the civilisation of Greece, brought into contact with the simple and ardent spirit of Arabia, flowered once more in a miraculous way.

Only three or four times in history has there been a period of so much intellectual eagerness, of such creative heat, of tolerance so rare, as when the Arab and the Greek met on the borders of Persia to perform their miracle, aided by the Syrian and the Jew. For the heart of the

AVICENNA

miracle was not Damascus but Baghdad, and all its complicated machinery was set in motion in the brief seventy years between the laying out of his new capital by the second Abbasid Caliph, Mansur, in 762 and the death of his great-grandson Mamun in 833. Damascus already had a history and traditions when the Omayads settled there. Baghdad—meaning God-given—had none, save as a sleepy Persian hamlet on the Tigris inhabited chiefly by Nestorian monks. In one of their monasteries Mansur took up his residence while he built his “Abode of Peace”—he and his Persian vizier the Barmecide, son of a Mage from Balkh. This association was typical of the spirit in which Mansur gathered around himself craftsmen, artists, and scholars of the different races of the land, in his ambition to rival the legendary splendour of Constantinople. The result, for art, was the Saracenic school whose works strew the track of the Arab from Transoxiana to Spain. Of the result for learning, Avicenna is but one example. And the policy of Mansur was followed by his immediate successors. His grandson Harun al Rashid, otherwise Aaron the Orthodox, famous throughout the world for his love of the humanities, built a hospice in Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims and granted Charlemagne the custody of the keys of the Holy Sepulchre. As for Mamun, born of a Persian mother and brought up among Persian and Greek philosophers, he was a builder of libraries and hospitals, a splendid patron of letters, and the founder of that school of translators which brought Greek philosophy into the ken of the East.

This great work was all the more remarkable because Greek learning had at that time almost died out in its

PERSIAN MINIATURES

own land. The task, as I have said, had already been begun by the Syrians. The schools of Antioch, Edessa, and Nisibis, and to a lesser degree that of Gand-i-Shapur, had translated many of the Greek writers into Syriac and Persian. Then the Ommayads, followed by Mansur, had caused not a few of these versions to be turned into Arabic. Under Mamun, however, the earlier and hastier translations were systematically revised and new ones made. The enlightened Caliph even attempted, without too great success, to buy or to borrow Greek manuscripts in Constantinople. For the Syrians had worked chiefly from the editions of Alexandria, often unhappily edited by the Neo-Platonists. As it was, their preference for the latter and for Aristotle brought it about that Plato became less familiar to the Arabs than Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Almagest, while the poets and dramatists, alas, remained unknown to them. Harun al Rashid, to be sure, had Homer translated into Syriac, though not into Arabic. But all the philosophical and scientific speculation of the Greeks, from Pythagoras down, became available to the Arabs in their own tongue. And when at last Europe began to take an interest in learning, it was found that Galen, for instance, was more complete in Arabic than in his own tongue.

The influence upon the impressionable Arabs of this glimpse into a new world was prodigious. The political authority of Baghdad soon ceased to be acknowledged east of the Zagros Mountains or west of the Euphrates; but in every country of Islam libraries, schools, and hospitals sprang up to perpetuate the work of the Abbasids. And those institutions inspired a scholarship far worthier of the name than anything known in Europe outside of

AVICENNA

Constantinople. It was, of course, a scholarship much more confused, much less critical, than European scholarship ultimately became. Mansur, like every one else in his time, took a deep interest in astrology. Yet that interest led back to the study of astronomy which had been interrupted in Alexandria by the zeal of Theophilus. Mamun once more caused a meridian of the earth to be measured, and, less bigoted than St. Augustine with regard to the form of the earth, caused geography to be taught from a globe. The Saracens adopted the simple Indian numerals which we call Arabic, perfected and named the study of algebra, mapped the heavens, developed the science of navigation, rectified the calendar, made experiments in optics and refraction, devised telescopes. The Spanish Moors, long before the time of Copernicus or Tycho Brahe, built the Giralda Tower in Seville for an observatory. And when the Spaniards reentered the city in 1248, they so little understood the use of the astronomical instruments they found there that they piously consecrated the Giralda as a bell tower.

Out of alchemy, too, out of the search for the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, was born a true chemistry. A ninth-century alchemist of Baghdad, somewhat vaguely known as Jafar, bears the same relation to chemistry that Hippocrates does to medicine. Before his time no acid stronger than vinegar was known; he was the first to discover nitric acid and aqua regia. His follower, Rhazes, or Ibn Zakarya, of Rei, experimenting in precipitates, gases, and the metaphysical spirits of things, produced absolute alcohol and sulphuric acid. Phosphorus, described by the Saracens as an artificial carbuncle, was another of their contributions to chemistry. They

PERSIAN MINIATURES

made pioneer calculations in specific gravity. And they, while our ancestors were treating disease by means of charms, amulets, and exorcisms, began to apply chemistry to medicine. If it was but a beginning, and if their contributions now seem slight, we must remember that the only advance in medicine from the time of Erosistratus and Hierophilus of Alexandria down to the seventeenth century was made by the Arabs. Among the 237 treatises of Rhazes, who flourished from about 850 to about 932, was one giving the earliest description of measles and small pox, and adumbrating the germ theory. Of Avicenna and the place he held in mediæval medicine I have already spoken. Abulcasis, or Abul Kasim, a Spanish contemporary of his, practised surgery little less scientifically than he would have done to-day, and wrote a surgical treatise in which is found the first known description of the syringe. Averroës later conceived the idea of making individual studies of the different diseases and their treatment, eventually carried out not by himself but by one of his pupils.

In other directions the Saracens made progress no less marked. They anticipated Newton in the study of gravity, though it remained for the great Englishman to make a universal application of the principle. They were much nearer those other Englishmen Darwin and Wallace in their view of the development of life than their Christian contemporaries. I shall not claim for the former the superiority in art and letters, though Saracen architecture, the "Thousand and One Nights," and the important Mohammedan literature of travel, geography, and history were of surprisingly early date. As concerns breeding, habits, and comfort the Arabs had an unquestioned su-

AVICENNA

periority. The Saracen cities were paved and clean long before those of France. London was seven hundred years later than Cordova in lighting her streets at night. The first clock seen in Europe was a present to Charlemagne from Harun al Rashid. Through the Moors of Spain were introduced to our fathers such novelties as paper, cotton, rice, sugar, and several fruits and flowers previously unknown to them. And there is no end to the European words derived from Arabic or Persian.

Was it weariness, in the end, that caused the Saracen inspiration to flicker and die out? Was it the constant hammering of Turks and Christians, the hopeless disintegration of that empire which had stretched from the Oxus to the Pillars of Hercules? At any rate, the pendulum of history swung again, waking Europe up from its thousand years of reaction. And it is strange how there seems to be something potent and immortal in that old Greek learning, which finally wrought again in Europe the miracle it had wrought in Asia so long before. Yet could anything be stranger than the journey it made, from land to land, from tongue to tongue, around the whole circuit of the Mediterranean, till it came back through Spain to Europe, to the farther shore of its own Ionian Sea? During the twelfth century there arose in Spain and Sicily schools of translators like those of Edessa and Baghdad, whose work it was to render into Latin, generally from Arabic, sometimes from Syriac or Hebrew, what was left of Greek literature. A little of it had been spared in Constantinople; but Constantinople was too far away and too hostile to be of any help. Only after the Crusaders captured Constantinople in 1204 did there appear in the West a few original Greek manuscripts. In the mean-

PERSIAN MINIATURES

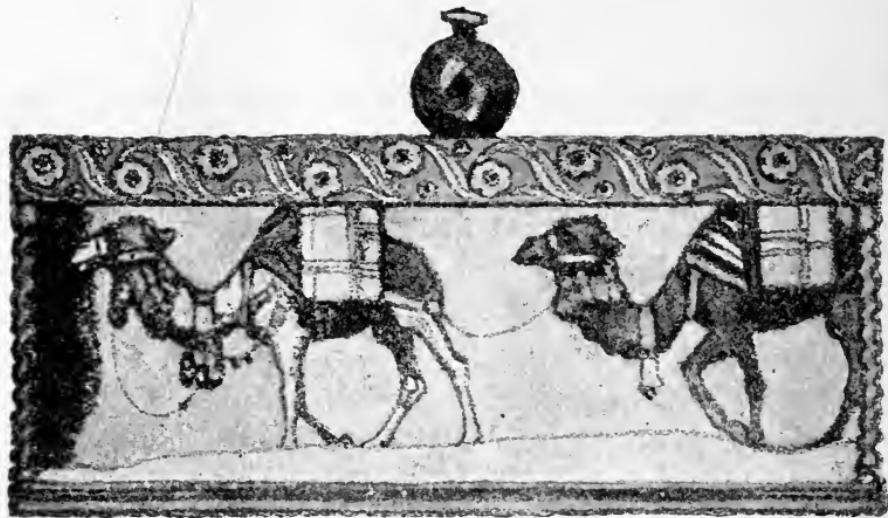
time there grew up the mendicant orders, among whom, and particularly among the Dominicans, were great friends of learning. Then in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were founded in turn the universities of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford, earliest of their kind in the West, inaugurating the so-called scholastic period. The German universities came a little later, as befitted a race not converted till the eighth century by English Benedictines! This scholastic period occupied the thirteenth and much of the fourteenth centuries, and was a time of busy translating, comparing, revising, philosophising, and theologising, to say nothing of anathematising. For the church was slow to give up its old antipathy to the Greeks; and here worse heathen than Aristotle were concerned, under whose wing Arab and Jewish doctors not a few made their appearance in Christendom.

So it was that Avicenna, the Persian of Bokhara and Hamadan, became one of the great names of mediæval Europe, exercising an empire over men's minds such as was exercised scarcely by Aristotle himself. In 1453 Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. The Greek refugees who fled to Italy took with them precious manuscripts, and the Renaissance received its final impulse. Yet in spite of the continued hostility of the church, in spite of the natural ill will between Europe and Asia, in spite of the just preference of scholars for original Greek manuscripts to those which had been three or four times translated, the last of the Arab philosophers of the East acquired so great credit that not until 1650, when medicine finally began to feel the impulse of the Renaissance, was Avicenna's Canon dropped from the curricula of Montpellier and Louvain. The book had then, since

AVICENNA

its first printings in Naples, Rome, and Venice, passed through thirty or more Latin editions. And to the end of time no one who wishes to acquaint himself with the learning of the Near East, to study the history of philosophy or medicine, or to understand the evolution of European culture, can escape knowing the name of Avicenna.

Such, O Virtue, O Justice, O Eternal Irony of Life, are the accidents which may befall a plumb of infinity, who sought truth not only in wells, and wisdom on the lips of dancers!



XIX

THE CARAVAN

*With my own eyes I saw in the desert
That the deliberate man outstripped him who had hurried on.
The wind-footed steed is broken down in his course,
While the camel-driver jogs on with his beast to the end of the
journey.*

Sadi: THE FLOWER GARDEN

ONE of my study windows, catching all the sun of the south, faces a narrow tilted country of gardens, darkly walled by a semicircle of mountains. One of my bedroom windows gives me a glimpse of sparser gardens, and the clay-coloured town, and the plain that dips and rises delicately against the north. But both rooms look east, into the desert.

It is the kind of desert which the Persians call *biaban*, not the vaster and more desolate *lut*. Beyond our own, however, no garden wall ventures into it. Neither house

THE CARAVAN

nor poplar breaks the simplicity of its flowing lines. The empty land droops away toward the left, intercepted only by the Musalla, that barren bluff which archæologists like to fancy the site of seven-walled Ecbatana. Not quite opposite my windows a smaller hill, bare and pointed like a cone, pricks the horizon. Beyond it lies an invisible hollow, the farther edge of which marks the limit of my visible world.

Of the sights to be seen from the four sides of our house, this view offers least. Yet because it is mine I like it, and because it is so open and solitary, and because the faithful Persian sun rarely disappoints me there of his morning miracle, and because at night stars hang there of a brilliancy I have never seen, and so low that I can watch them from my bed. And I am new enough from the West never to forget that those windows look into Asia. Beyond that uneven rim of the East lies Kum. Beyond Kum is the *lut*, that great desert which has small reason to be less renowned than Gobi or the Sahara. Beyond the *lut* are Afghanistan, and Kashmir, and Tibet.

In the morning the sun looks strange to me, because he is fresh from Tibet and Kashmir and Afghanistan. At night the stars make me wonder what other watchers see them—what riders of camels, what prowlers of the dark, what sitters by red embers. How many times have I made in imagination that journey eastward from my window, across wastes of sand and salt and poisoned water, through forests and glaciers that prop the sky, into valleys the wildest and most secret of the earth—that journey which no man of the West could make alone, or undisguised, and come alive into the uplands of China! And if he did, no man of all he met could understand the

PERSIAN MINIATURES

reason of his coming. They have no curiosity about us, the lands we live in, the things we live for. Why have we so continuing a curiosity about them? Is it that in those distant and silent places we would not once hear a factory whistle or see a railroad track? Is it the lure of their jealous seclusion? Of their cloudy antiquity? Or is it a simple astonishment that men can be content with so little—find the sight of the sun enough, and the sound of known voices? Who knows but there might be in it some vague ancestral stirring of nostalgia, or a secret question of our own unrest? What if, after all, they of the East see the end from the beginning, and live a life more intense than we? But even there whistles begin to sound. Nearer and nearer creep the rails that thread the ends of the world. And what then?

I could never tell all I see in the desert at night.

In the daytime I am more concerned with what passes between our garden wall and the crumpled rim of the horizon. There is no great passing on that tawny slope save of light and shadow, for the highways all march in other directions out of the town. Runnels of water flash in the sun at their seasons. In the autumn and in the spring oxen tickle the earth with the little wooden plough of Asia. There is a time when I watch the rippling of wheat like a lake. That is also the time when I may hear, heightened by distance, a melancholy singing. Peasants occasionally pass, with russet rags flapping about bare knees. A rare horseman gallops afar, his dark mantle eddying behind him. Mules and donkeys are less rare, tinkling from nowhere to nowhere.

But silence is so much the note of the place that I was astonished one winter afternoon to hear a new sound,

THE CARAVAN

a jingle-jangle that grew louder as I listened. I was the more astonished because snow was deep on the ground, and passers had been fewer than ever. I went to the window to look.

Camels! Out of the crack between Musalla and the town they came, the dark line of them lengthening obliquely across the snow till it reached the corner of the garden above ours. I am a child about camels. I shall never see enough of them. It is not only their strangeness, however, which for us of the West makes them the symbol of Asia. They are immensely decorative in themselves—though they are so much the colour of the lands they live in that they have a curious power of invisibility, for creatures so large, unless you catch them against the sky. But the snow brought out the silhouettes of these the more fantastically because of the loads lashed on either side of their humps. The pommel of one saddle spindled up into a staff gay with coloured wool, ending in a flat hand of brass. I caught glimpses of saddle-cloths and big saddlebags, woven like the precious rugs of the country. Necklaces of bright beads made another touch of colour, or dangling plaques of beads, with much blue in them to ward off the Evil Eye. And the camels wore almost as many bells as beads. Some carried them around their necks in strings. A few beasts, bigger than the rest, had one great copper bell slung from the saddle, which rang out a slow ding-dong amid the general jingle-jangle. It made one think of Charpentier's "*Impressions d'Italie*," and the way he suggests the sound of mule bells. But this was something deeper and wilder, evoking the endless marches of the desert.

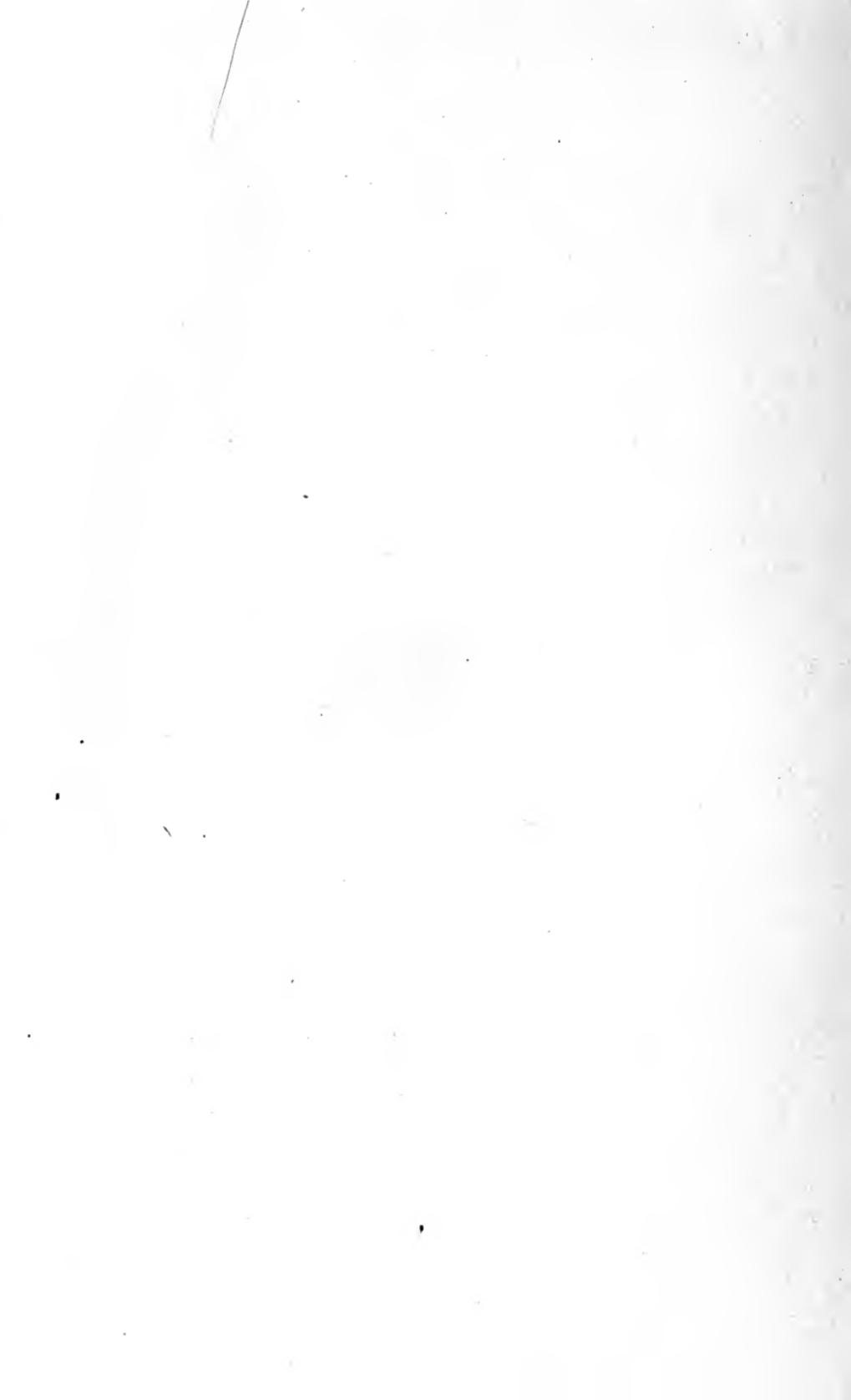
PERSIAN MINIATURES

There were more camels in that caravan than I had ever seen before. It did not occur to me to count them until many of them were out of sight. Then I counted nearly three hundred. They marched single file in groups of six or seven, each group roped together like barges in a tow and led by a man. Many of the men had an odd Mongolian look in their tight skin caps, with the fur or lamb's wool inside. The eyes of almost all of them were inflamed from the glare of the sun on the snow. Where had they come from? Where were they going? I had no tongue to ask, nor could I have understood if they told me.

They disappeared at last among the bare gardens. But that strange, complicated music, punctuated by the deep notes of the big copper bells, sounded so long in the thin winter air that I could not be quite sure when it ceased to sound. Indeed I often hear it now at night, when I look at the low stars of the desert and think of Afghanistan, and Kashmir, and Tibet.

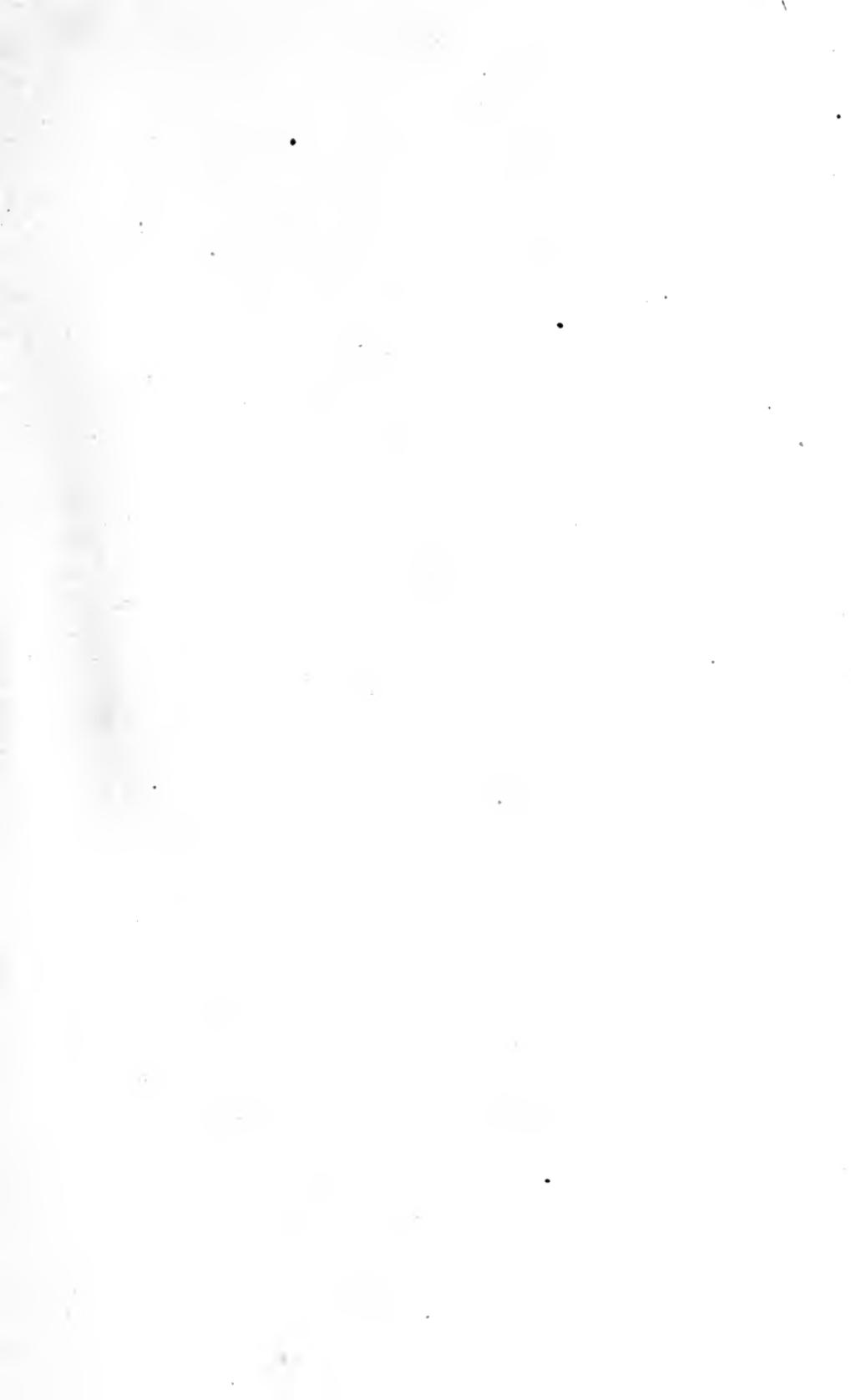


THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.











14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

RENEWALS ONLY - Tel. No. 642-3405

(N) HFDI

ICLF (N)

JUL 23 1968 7 0

JUL 25 1974 4 7

RECEIVED
REC'D CIRC DEPT

JUL 25 '68 5 PM

MR 27 7410

RECD. LD
Due end of month
subject to recall and
SENT ON ILL

OCT 01 1995

U.C. BERKELEY

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

LD 21A-60m-2, '67
(H241s10)476B

A26 Nov 52 Y
1952 LU

REC'D LD FEB 22 '68 5 PM

LD 21-50m-8, 32

FEB 7 1968 3 4

627009

DS 258

DD

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

